

ERTH JOURNAL

Issue #35

Vol 3, no.8

**NEW
ENEMIES
AND ALLIES
IN THE
WORLD OF
GREYHAWK!**

GREYHAWK CONSTELLATIONS!

by Andy Miller

FIGHTING MONKS!

17 Martial
Orders

8 Magical
Books

3 Short Stories

1 New Monster

Paluserus

Black Dragon of the Gnatmarsh

**A Library of Suel
Magical Tomes**
by Mike Bridges

SAIL THE SEA OF DUST ON EXTRAORDINARY SAND SHIPS

REGIONAL GAZETTEER OF LO NAKAR

Librarian's Chronicle

Pictures. One of the major differences in the OJ over the years comes from what gaming products look like in the Digital Age. When the OJ began, it was much like academic thesis paper. It was pages and pages of black and white text, with nothing to break it up other than a little bit of basic formatting like bold, italics, headings, etc.

Nowadays, artists can create and submit art from all over the world. Products are lavishly illustrated with amazing illustrations from artists no one would have even been exposed to 25+ years ago, because they had no way of getting their art out there. Back then, art was basically just what the publisher could find ... and fantasy art was hard to find.

Today, desktop publishing is a thing and even fan-created work mimics the look of professional published work. The OJ has art from creators in Greece, Poland, Australia ... oh, and the US, too. We look specifically for artists who are not only GH fans, but who create pictures which bring our imagination to life!

But, along the same lines ... the traditional gift for a 26th anniversary is *pictures*. And it's the 26th anniversary of the Oerth Journal being created!

26 years is a long time. Back in May of 1996, a few fans got the idea to gather up some of the writing of some very creative authors in the GH community and put it all into a small collection of articles in a PDF. It was so straightforward, the choice to publish in DOC or PDF was the biggest thing they had to face.

This issue strives to capture that same creativity of the earliest fan creators, but also to put in a sumptuous amount of art. We try to spark the imagination of our readers in as many ways as we possibly can.

So, happy 26th anniversary! Here's a whole bunch of pictures of the World of Greyhawk!

And if you or anyone you know is an artist, and would like to submit an illustration to the OJ, send an email to OJ@greyhawkonline.com, or tag us on social media so you can ...

"Create and Share, for the WORLD OF GREYHAWK!"

'Til the starbreak!

Kristoph Nolen
Editor-in-Chief



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A depiction of "Paluserus" the "Master of the Swamp" of the Gnatmarsh, described by Paul Jurdeczka in this issue (p10).

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WILDS OF WOMTHAM

The Marches of Nyrond

By Rodney Hart

The Flanaess is a vast landscape filled with well-known sites made known through the lore of Dungeons & Dragons. Depending upon which map of the Flanaess is studied, it may appear that most of the world is empty of noteworthy features. That may be the case for any given hectare of land but during overland travel, the heroes of our Dungeons & Dragons games will see that is not the case – a spring flows, large rock formations loom, or a lone conifer on a hilltop sways in the wind. A DM could easily include topographical features that would add great interest to overland travel. Quick inspiration is available through a search of images on the internet and with a little preparation, real-world facts can be sprinkled into the game narrative to give the game a more immersive experience. What follows is an example applied to one corner of the Flanaess that is often characterized as “dull.” Shortly, it will be shown this is not the case.

The Wilds of Womtham

The Royal Duchy of Womtham stretches along the eastern frontier of the Kingdom of Nyrond, from the southern edges of the Gomboge Forest along the transition of the Flinty Hills south to the Harp River and Adri Forest. As the western slopes of the Flinty Hills become divided by large fluvial valleys, the herbaceous covered limestone and granite highlands become the dominant features of the Duchy. In the verdant, agrarian river valleys the subjects of Duke Finelann Boomgren look to these highlands as grazing land for their herds of sheep, goats, and cattle. Herders know to keep their animals close to their settlements as many predators roam the highlands, both animal and sentient. Aside from this marginal use, the Womtham Highlands are truly wild and little known. The original Royal surveys of the region date back to the Third Century (CY) and focused primarily upon mineral resources, in particular the skarn formations where igneous granite contacted the sedimentary limestone. Skarns create ideal mining locations for gemstones along with rich veins of silver and gold that push into the marble and limestone.

Duke Boomgren was aware of the potential threats to his subjects coming from the Highlands yet was not overly concerned due to the regular Nyrondese patrols and sanctioned mercenary groups^[1] that could handle most of the expected dangers. Reports of spellcasters, both arcane and divine, going missing on the roads between settlements

and sightings of supposed Ahlissan necromancers elevated Boomgren's concern enough to send a trusted knight, Sir Andred Trellack. He went mounted upon his griffon to reconnoiter the highlands between Deghulan and Cordrend. Trellack's mission was unexpectedly cut short and only by good fortune was the griffon able to find capable folk to rescue his fallen master. Once safe, the knight's report reached the Duke: the Womtham Highlands held many secrets that needed to be explored and investigated. Although notices were posted in Womtham and Cordrend for adventurous souls to petition for Grants of Exploration with the local magistrate, Boomgren wanted the region where Trellack was felled to be catalogued by his own loyal servants, as well. He called upon the Flan druid Valotte and her halfling ranger companion, Lyr Swifhart. Excerpts of their report follow.

A Broader Problem

“Your Grace, it is with serendipity I begin our report. Having fully equipped ourselves in Deghulan, Master Swifhart and I were undecided on where to start our explorations knowing that Sir Trellack's misfortune was near Owlsthope, some 30 leagues to the east. Lyr thought it best to begin from Finton and follow the Highlands south; I felt it would be prudent to first visit the tower Trellack described. From there, we might conduct a grid search from a known point of reference. Ultimately it was decided to take the road south from Deghulan and its black vapours^[2], through Gryphon Valley, and turn east towards the xart lands beginning the grid pattern from Gryphon's Roost^[3].”

“Lyr thought it wise to stop at a roadside inn along the way where a large herd of sheep milled about outside the building. He suggested that speaking with the herder within may yield details of the Womtham Highlands which, although well known to local citizens, are unknown



Heraldry by Anna Meyer

[1] Adventuring parties that have paid the appropriate taxes necessary to operate in Nyrond are sanctioned and must always carry their documentation. Otherwise, they are brigands and subject to harassment of varying degrees.

[2] Deghulan's smelters provide 40% of Nyrond's iron production; the dwarven metallurgists keep their forges lit constantly, fueled by coal quarried to the north of town. An inversion layer of black smoke blankets Deghulan and much of the agricultural lands south of town.

[3] The pass halfway between Deghulan and the Cracked Tankard Inn has a permanent warming cabin built to provide shelter for the teamsters driving oxen-pulled wagons of iron goods south to the Ahlissa frontier.

generally within Womtham. Indeed, we learned the locations of some interesting flora the herder was fond of frequenting. We ascertained the medicinal plants found there could prove useful to the Duchy's apothecaries. While pressing the herder for anything of interest which was not a narcotic, I noticed a group of travelers had taken interest in our conversation. The half-elfen man had an air of gentry, but his two companions looked to be refugees from the Pale and in poor health. Beory's blessings are for all and I approached them with offers of assistance for their ails. The Pale couple were tended and Erdan, their Nyronese sponsor, insisted upon providing us a meal before we returned to the road. Lyr and I were comfortable with their expression of gratitude. The spiced potatoes and ham were delicious, and the wine washed it all down too easily. In hindsight, it was the two cloaked figures, one much taller than the other, that Erdan kept glancing at which should have made me aware that something was afoot. But during the moment I thought he was merely being cautious, as was I."

"I should have recognized Shari Oil's^[4] particular tang in the wine but in this I failed you, Your Grace. Serendipity."

"I awoke with a start. I had been drugged into a slumber and found myself bound and gagged, draped across a horse like a saddle blanket. It was dark. It was sleeting. Unbeknownst to me at the time, Lyr had been thrown from a cart at that same moment, pinned beneath it and in a similar predicament as I. All he could hear was the distressed calls of pain from the cart's harnessed horse. I too heard his beast's pain, but I was focused upon keeping my own animal calm. It remarkably had its hooves beneath it still and I wanted that to remain the case. Faintly I could hear sounds of battle and understood then the nature of the late vernal sleet. Focused upon my equine charge, I kept it calm until the sleet storm subsided and the nature of the conflict was at last revealed to me. A group of predominantly Flinty Hill folk were seen to be triumphant. The half-elf Erdan was barely visible in the light of a drift globe, apparently dead by blunt trauma, though a mushroom-hat wearing gnome was using a sword too large for him to assure Erdan, who was apparently the person who poisoned my wine, did not rise again.

The gnome Slothfinger has an odd habit of tasting unusual liquids and had discovered the oil in Erdan's belt pouch. He offered me a strange beverage to get the pasty aftertaste of the drug out of my mouth. It was potent but warmed me and cleared my head, though I nearly spit it out due to shock at the flavor. He claims it was a distilled liqueur from scum creepers^[5] and even had some fabled cave fisher liqueur. He insisted I show my gratitude for being rescued by having a taste of the latter liqueur, but I respectfully declined. Gnomes! The others were gathered around a fallen comrade, another gnome who I later learned was named Ursala. This woman's garments suggested a barbaric totem, strangely exemplified by the bear-like doll she had tucked in her belt. A young man was crouched, praying quietly over her remains. Adjacent to Ursala's body

was the corpse of a human woman, wearing plate armor adorned with the symbols of Hextor, clearly the adversary in the fighting. The young man praying was none other than your own nephew, Your Grace, Glorious^[6] Landen Boomgren."

"Your nephew, under direction of the Holy Order of the Supernal Topaz Defenders, had been investigating the disappearance of magic-users within the region. One of his companions, a halfling woman called Eve, who had an unusual Womthamraner canine companion, had a sister who had been abducted. Landon and Eve had been attempting to locate the lost sister her and rescue her. The Hextorite woman was working with another gnome, one Master Wobbles, who was the shorter cloaked figure I had seen at the inn. They were trafficking the captured magic-using subjects, selling them to quaggoth intermediaries in caves accessed below the xuart-occupied tower Sir Trellack had discovered! Eve's sister had been sold into the bondage of Underoerth slavers. Landen and his companions, the Womtham Wayfinders, were tracking Master Wobbles who carried a manifest of those unfortunates he sold to the slavers. The Wayfinders had caught him attempting to sell off another group of captives to quaggoths and some competing derro a day earlier, disrupting the exchange. Wobbles and the Hextorite woman were on the run along with two other companions that they suspect split off early in the escape from the caves. Frankly, all the details of Landen's explanation are a bit muddled by the Shari oil's aftereffects, but Landen explained the captured spellcasters were needed by aboleth overlords to empower a "Tower of Sovereignty" that would control surface dwellers from afar – delusions of grandeur credited to ancient beings of legend if I do say so myself. Yet, your nephew was adamant in his belief. Suffice to say, you should speak with your nephew or those within the Bastion of Faith that know the full details of his mission. What we learned from him and his companions, especially the gregarious Zepp, gave us better focus on where to explore than the ramblings of the herder! Serendipity indeed!"

Salix Springs

"The location of the Flan Highland Folk was fortuitous information to learn from Zepp and the Womtham Wayfinders. We met one of their scouts late in the afternoon as I was taking pressings of centaurea flowers and they invited us to their camp. The Highlanders have long been allies to the Crown, sending several of their tribe members to serve the King in years past, especially in the Bone March Campaigns as you well know, Your Grace. Their knowledge of the highlands expedited this report to you as much of the old Royal survey was confirmed that second night out from Deghulan."

"Elder Bettat was pleased to converse in our hereditary tongue, though we would speak in the Merchant's Tongue for Lyr's benefit when he joined us at the fire. Bettat found the Royal survey to be fascinating in its Malachite Throne-

[4] Shari Oil, poison, ingested, onset time of one minute, Saving Throw failure (Constitution DC 15) unconscious for 1d3 hours. Works best in heavily salted foods.

[5] AD&D Monster Manual II page 107.

[6] Priest of Heironeous, member of the Valorous Host.

7] Four Clans in the Merchant Tongue.

biased perspective which I had not really considered before. Much has changed in the last three centuries, yet much is still the same – such is the paradox of an enlightened society in the eyes of our Flan kin.”

“Bettat was aware of Master Wobbles and his allies traveling through the region for ‘many moons’ which I find concerning based on your nephew’s information. The Highland Folk chose to avoid them, even when Wobbles’ activities displaced them from their traditional summer lands in Ceithre Chinneadh^[7], as the gnome slaver had undead servants in addition to the others the Womtham Wayfinders had encountered. The sightings of necromancers from the south bears some credence now, Your Grace. Bettat intends to return to Ceithre Chinneadh as their winter settlement at Salix Springs has borne the brunt of their livelihood these past years and these lands need to go fallow for a time. Indeed, in the morning as we departed the Highlander camp, I could see that the area was taxed from the Flannae settlement, unusual for this transient folk. I expect the next time Salix Springs is visited, only the sod longhouse will be a clue to the larger settlement that made welcome to Lyr and I.”

Ceithre Chinneadh

“The highlands of Womtham are an interesting mixture of limestone, metamorphic rocks like gneiss and marble, and granitoid rocks, Your Grace. All these stones have great utility in the construction of buildings and bridges. The Bastion of Faith in Womtham is constructed with the distinctive white and black banded minerals of gneiss quarried near Finton. The white feldspars of the gneiss used for that holy site exemplifies the purity of Good that will prevail over the darkness of Evil, evident by the greater amount of white is within the stones than the black hornblende and biotite minerals. The stonemasons show through the creations of Beory that Heironeous wins out over Hextor!”

“I digress.”

“In the center of the wilds between Deghulan, Finton, and Owlsthorpe are dozens of natural limestone towers, many of them dwarfing the Royal towers of Rel Mord. The Baklunish word ‘*fenglin*’ describes these limestone features best, hinting at the caverns that are intertwined beneath the breathtaking structures as they are derived from karst. As you well know, Your Grace, natural caverns are nearly always formed from calcareous rock, forming sinkholes that reach the surface. As the stone washes away over many rainy seasons, valleys are formed where the rock was swept to the sea, and in the Womtham Highlands fenglin are left where the limestone and marble had higher amounts of quartz and other silicious minerals. At the highest elevations of the Owlsthorpe Highlands, four massive fenglin stand facing each other in near alignment with the Celestial Stars. These fenglin are called Ceithre Chinneadh, referencing the four clans of Flannae highlanders that originally occupied these lands before the Great Migrations. It was here the clans would meet during Richfest to trade, to arrange marriages, and complete and celebrate those from previous years, and to revere the gods. Elder Bettat and his kin honored the

traditions of their ancestors, returning to Ceithre Chinneadh at the beginning of summer until recent years.”

“The presence of the slavers in the area must have been truly unsettling to the Flan highlanders as why would a proud folk allow trespassers to spoil their sacred site for so long? Only then did I begin to wonder if Elder Bettat was not entirely forthright with us. Something more intimidating than zombies must have been present. Lyr and I pressed on to reach the fenglins before the third night. There was much to learn at the site and the tenacity of the gorbels had to be put behind us.”

“As we neared the fenglin of Ceithre Chinneadh, a deep resonating thrum could be heard. It reminded me of a bass oboe. Only as we sighted the limestone towers did I understand the sound was emanating from the towers themselves! The wind speed and direction varied the pitch and tone of the thrumming sound. It is awe inspiring to listen to, Your Grace! I could hear the words of Ulaa as she conversed with Beory! To my ears I sensed relief, rejoicing at a burden released. I could sense the powerful Orgone Energies^[8] that pervaded the environment as well. Ley lines were near, I was sure of it, which made it clear the value of the site to both a Flannae culture and to individuals wielding magic for personal gain.”

“The shadows were growing long as I waited for Lyr to return from his reconnoiter of the vale in the centre of the fenglin. When I finally heard his call, I felt recharged by the Song of Ceithre Chinneadh. I was a bit surprised to see Lyr standing beside a pile of bodies when I found him, as I had not heard any sounds of combat. They were the undead Bettat feared but they were not slain by my companion. Arrows seemed to have been the primary source of their destruction. Lyr had found tracks of others that he surmised were our liberators from Gryphon Valley, likely in pursuit of Wobbles and the Hextorite. They had not mentioned this but so much information had been shared quickly that I may have missed this detail. It appeared as if the Wayfinders had attempted to burn the remains but the cool, humid weather we suffered in late Spring prevented their fire from taking to the tñender. The remains were in poor condition, most of the walking dead appearing to have been animated for a few winters to suffer the ice heave zombie flesh suffers from freezing. Two were recent additions, both human women. Aside from their generalized Oeridian features, there was nothing noteworthy about them. I noted birthmarks and scars to assist with possible identification which can be found separately from this report, Your Grace. Lyr and I felt that the wind was calling for these poor souls to be returned to the Mother, so we located drier tinder and, with assistance from Beory and her divine gifts, finished the pyre the Wayfinders had started.”

“We broke our fast and made our way towards the westernmost fenglin where Lyr had heard stones falling in the night. We feared that Wobbles may have returned having escaped the Wayfinders. A path was found that led up to the fenglin base where we could see a cave. Moving up to the entrance the odours of long-term humanoid occupation became all too noticeable, though a hint of sandalwood was apparent over the urine. As I looked to Lyr to discuss our next move, I sensed a looming shadow above us and covered my head to

8] Some Flan cultures speak of Orgone Energies that magic-users manipulate to great magical effects. In other cultures of the Flanaess these are called “Ley Lines”. In the Forgotten Realms arcanists refer to these energies as The Weave.

feel something heavy crash into my shoulder! The cry of pain from Lyr proved he too was struck. As I ducked and moved to the fenglin face, I looked back to see a boulder where I once stood that seemed to be slowly moving but inconsistent with an object settling on the ground. With my staff at the ready I saw Lyr was pinned beneath a large rock that was attempting to bite him! What manner of creature mimics rocks like the subterranean piercer yet is of such large dimensions? These animals were unfamiliar to me and I moved on instinct to assist my halfling companion to push the boulder off him and send it bowling down the slope. The creature that had struck me seemed helpless. Looking above the cave entrance I saw several locations where such things could rest and fall upon unsuspecting creatures below. This kind of ambush normally would suggest the creature had a means of retreating but having not pinned me it was of little threat as it could barely move. Or so I thought. As I tended to Lyr's minor injuries my boulder proved me wrong as it managed to shift, wobble, and roll towards us and pin my foot underneath it! It nipped at my bare foot like a stray cat gobbles up spoiled food, its moist orifice no warmer than the environment around us. We managed to roll the thing over before it could do too much harm to my toes. The interior of the stone body oscillated as if it had a counterbalance within it to generate motion. Odd. Keeping it pinned to its presumed top, we set to examine the mouth feature expecting to find something like a snail. These bowlers^[9] share many similarities with piercers and common terrestrial mollusks as the stone shell of the creature is akin to a hermit crab's shelter, protecting the invertebrate animal within. I am certain that piercers and bowlers are closely related. Lyr and I studied my attacker for a time before realizing that smaller stones were moving about the area! Young? Upon close examination we did indeed find that there were several smaller versions of the bowlers about. They seemed to be hunting by rolling over insects. We spent some time taking notes being sure to treat the creatures with respect. The individual that was rolled downslope appeared later, moving slowly via cilia surrounding the mouth. The one we had been studying gurgled oddly and the other one responded in turn. We left the two to reuniting, assuming they were the parents of the smaller ones. No sooner had they bumped into each other than they began begging for food like hunting hounds! Their whine was too obvious! They tipped back their rocky shells to expose their mouths to us! I assume that Wobbles and his associates must have been using the creatures as a guardian of the cave, feeding them to keep them compliant. All of this bears further investigation and a full report to the Royal Zoological Society in Rel Mord."

"The cave of Ceithre Chinneadh held the source of the sandalwood scent as we made our way through the entrance. A pike's distance in, a dislodged iron cell door rested on the floor. The iron workings drilled into the stone indicated the broken cell door once kept a chamber to the right enclosed. The stink of excrement and worse from the passage could not be ignored. The passage to the left opened into a larger

chamber that still had the heavy sandalwood air. The room was empty aside from a handful of blankets wadded up next to a cold fire pit. Soot from the fire pit was minimal, likely due to the smoke escaping through cracks in the ceiling which connected with the openings in the fenglin the Song of Ceithre Chineadh thrummed from. Flannae artwork was still visible on the walls and ceilings of the chamber beneath the garish profanity of Hextor symbology. A couple of Aerdi patriotic slogans were written with some care, proclaiming the Kingdom of Nyrond as weak and ready for plundering. It was disgusting. The Flannae art, what I could make of it, was incredibly old as a layer of calcite coated the original pigments. The images were keyed to ceremonies the Flan held here; images of the moons with full faces, the blessing of children were the clearest images. The back of the chamber appeared to have the oldest art. It was hard to discern as the calcite had clouded the images. The art depicted tall, rectangular buildings towering above a cityscape. A reference to the legends of the Ur-Flan? I will have to ask Elder Bettat if our paths cross again."

"At that moment Lyr yipped a warning as he stumbled back from a wall with a large symbol of Hextor upon it. The black, arrow-clutching fist dissolved to show an utter blackness in the wall that was both there with us, yet apart from us. The hair on my arms and legs rose as I felt a pulse of orgone energy in the room, the thrum of the Song of Ceithre Chinneadh both being felt and heard in the chamber. From the darkness appeared two motes of light, spinning slowly like pinwheels of stars^[10]. They moved forward together like eyes approaching the threshold of there to here, if that makes any sense, Your Grace. I could see my exhalations of breath in the air as a chill gripped us both. The barrier between the planes was about to be breached."

"We fled."

Gorbel Fen

"At the top of the ridge north of Salix Springs we could begin to make out the silhouettes of the fenglins of Ceithre Chinneadh against the morning sun. It was then that we could smell faintly the odour of rotten eggs. Denying Lyr's incriminating look at me, I suggested a natural source could be nearby. While hot springs are not unheard of in the Duchy, they are rare, while geysers are unknown entirely. No mention of geothermal sites was in the Royal survey, so Lyr and I deemed it worthy to locate the sulfurous source."

"Making our way down the north face of the ridge we spotted a hint of steam and made our way towards the source. The whiffs of sulfurous vapours grew more frequent until we found ourselves in a drainage with a small stream, the water steaming in the cool morning air. Broad leafed forbs grew thick along the banks, many of them in flower. Small succulents that were unknown to me grew among the marble outcrops on the southwest side of the steam. Lyr pointed out

[8] In the Forgotten Realms arcanists speak of The Weave, in some Flan cultures they speak of Orgone Energies that magic-users manipulate to great magical effects.

[9] AD&D Monster Manual II page 21.

[10] Drelb, AD&D Monster Manual II page 60.

[11] A long, narrow mass of igneous rock that intruded into older rocks, usually along fissures and micro-faults, to form planar formations when exposed by erosion.

there were no birds to be seen around the stream and for that matter no amphibious life was noted either. As the banks were lush with vegetation, the water was not too acidic to hamper life but perhaps the foul smell deterred avian life. We located the source of the hot spring in an enlarged basin on the north side of the drainage bottom. It had been shaped by humanoid hands albeit smaller than mine. Fae? Goblins? We were uncertain as the prints were eroded. The water was nearly too hot to enjoy with my feet but to my hand's touch it was comfortable enough for an impromptu rinsing of my face and hair. From down stream we heard some unusual popping sounds drifting in with the light breeze. Lyr and I stowed the few plant samples we had gathered and made our way to the sound's source. We reached a granitoid-dike^[11] that formed a natural dam, forcing the water over the rock's smooth face as a steaming waterfall. Below the dike was a wide basin of fen, filled densely with large carnivorous pitcher plants near the edge which then became sparse at the center. Amongst the pitcher plants were dozens of red globes that were floating on the water like apples in a Brewfest barrel. A loud pop sounded with a corresponding bubble breaking the fen's watery surface near the center. Fire gas?"

"Making our way down to the fen edge, small clouds of black gnats took to the air, our footfalls disturbing them from the short sedge grasses that grew on drier ground. Lyr was sketching the lay of the land in our journal as I moved to examine the pitcher plants, unfamiliar with this species. The parallel veining on the pitcher body was a deep purple like eggplant and I hoped it could be a potential source of dye pigment. The gnats buzzed around my face, keen to land and bite at me. I had but swatted at them once before one of the red globes moved quickly towards me. From the top of the globe sprouted six eyes on segmented stalks forming a circle as it hopped out of the fen with a louder popping sound, two clawed feet dangling beneath it^[12]! I lunged for my staff as it landed upon me, its claws raking at my arm. Drawing blood, a mouth appeared below the eyestalks and latched on to the wound. The creature's body squeezed in on itself creating a powerful suction on my arm — I could feel my lifeblood draining as if I were plagued by a stirge! My staff bonked off the creature's side as if hitting a pumpkin and before I could strike again the fen was a blur of motion as red globes hopped, bounced and skipped towards me creating a cacophony of popping sounds with their approach!"

"Lyr's first arrow hit the one on my arm causing it to explode in a blast of guts and some of my own blood it had ingested. The entrails were caustic, burning at my exposed skin and unfortunately in my open mouth, which I promptly clamped shut after spitting out the gore — blood pudding with too much lemon and not enough mint - it is a taste I will never forget. By the time I had my wits about me, two more had latched on to me while others bounced off, unable to find purchase on my body. Lyr focused his bow shots on those nearing me after seeing the first one's gas spore-like demise. The erratic, kinetic trajectories of so many globes was dizzying. I called upon Beory's blessings, asking for the scene to take a calmer tone. The sedge grasses began to reach out and grasp at the globes' feet, pitcher plants made sucking sounds and snared globes. A few conjured vines helped to bat down others until there were only a few

loose which immediately retreated into the center of the fen, disappearing below the water's surface to a medley of pops. Backing away from the visceral shrapnel, Lyr finished off the other ensnared globes, each dying with a resounding 'pop!'."

"We completed the rest of our survey at a safe distance from the fen, seeing a ring of eyestalks popping out the water a few times. At least these beasts understand what not to eat when it fights back! If only owlbears could be taught the same."

The Butterfly Tower

"The remnants of the road grade were distinct where the engineers made significant cuts and fills to level the road. Judging by the tailings seen earlier, the ore wagons have been traveling this route for years. There must be some record of the dwarves that built this in the records at Schukendale. The road passed within fifty feet of the ruin Slothfinger called the Butterfly Tower. After our experience in the cave at Ceithre Chinneadh, the gnome's tale bears hints of truth rather than cave fisher liqueur-induced hallucinations. As Slothfinger predicted, the butterflies were not present when we arrived in the early afternoon. In fact not a soul was to be seen."

"Lyr and I made our way up the short slope to take in the sight of the ruin. Most of the tower stones were absent, likely recycled by the dwarves for their own construction work. The hexagonal footprint of the tower was clear enough, the grasses around the remaining stones trampled down by many feet, the whole suggesting a footprint thirty feet from wall to opposite wall. One wall remained intact facing the northwest, rising twenty-four feet to its apex roughly in the center of the wall's span. The wall's height dropped sharply to the north-facing wall segment with only three feet of that corner still intact. The wall dropped to a western wall junction at a height of twelve feet before the wall crumbled to ground height just short of the junction with the south-facing wall. Holes in the northwest wall showed where support beams would have maintained a wooden second story floor. Nothing remains of the tower's roof joints to indicate its nature. The granite stones were covered in numerous lichens and moss on the northerly facing sides. The fact that portions of the walls were still standing was remarkable. Pressing my hand against the wall I could sense a faint pulse of orgone energy. It was time to meditate and wait."

"Slothfinger's prediction that the butterflies would appear an hour before sunset was accurate. I felt a stirring of air and once more my arms and legs were covered in goose flesh as a pale blue schiller washed over the second story portion of the northwest wall. Butterflies, hundreds of them, small, with grey-blue wings with a white fringe and vibrantly blue body, began to stream out of the wall as if an unseen window's shutters had burst open from their pressed mass. Like a flock of starlings, they spun and shifted above our heads as if trying to gain their bearings. Lyr, having prepared a net ahead of time, captured a few of the insects while I watched their pattern play out. They first flew towards the northeast and the Flinty Hills before turning

[12] Gorbel, AD&D Fiend Folio page 46.

back on themselves, coming back to the tower where the butterfly mass mingled with additional insects that had lagged behind, and then in unison they fluttered off to the north-northwest in the direction of Finton.”

“The schiller remained faintly visible on the wall which urged Lyr to action. Pulling out a common from his belt pouch, he tossed it at the second story wall. It struck the wall with an appropriate ring of copper on stone and fell to the ground. One last butterfly fluttered out of the wall before the schiller vanished.”

“We were amazed at what we had witnessed. Calling upon Beory’s blessings, Lyr and I tried to divine the nature of the wall and tower. The butterflies are Arctic Blues, found at tree-line altitude in the Rakers and more commonly in the vast tundra of the Great North, from Stonehold west to Blackmoor. Ley lines intersect at the tower, inferring a thinner barrier between the planes and thus a more efficient way for magic to conjure something from one place to another. Wizards will choose such locations for teleportation circles or to cast more powerful portal magics. Permanent portal magics are possible as well. This must be the case here as well, Your Grace.”

“Portals require a key to trigger their magic. This can be a literal key, but most often a key phrase. Lyr has read of portals that are activated when certain objects are pressed to the portal surface. We suspect that the Arctic Blue butterflies are the key to open the portal to the Butterfly Tower. As to what will open the portal on the Duchy side, we do not know yet. More research is necessary, and I will need to locate Slothfinger and speak with him further. I sensed he had more to say about the Butterfly Tower but as they were pressed to get their fallen comrade to Deghulan, he did not.”

“What may lie on the other side of the portal is pure speculation, but logic suggests a similar tower structure. One that is high in the mountains or in the far north. It is

possible that a network of these towers exists, scattered across the Flanae.^[13] A long-ago culture utilized the conjunction of ley lines to create a portal and if those ley lines have not shifted over the centuries, they will function with the proper key. Horizon Walkers^[14] of Fharlanghn will know where there are major ley line intersections; they may even know of other ancient hexagonal towers that are still standing.”

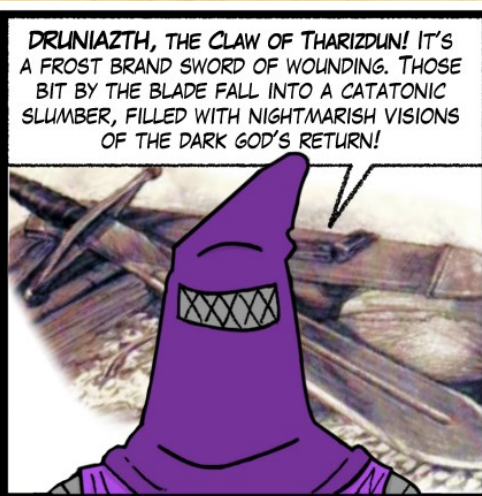
“I urge you, Your Grace, to invest resources to this task of unlocking the mysteries of the Butterfly Tower. While it does not seem to be a danger to the Duchy, some individuals must know of its features and could be using it for personal gain and causing indirect harm to the kingdom. I cannot help but wonder if Master Wobbles knows of the Tower and uses it somehow to ferry magic-using captives from the Butterfly Tower to slavers elsewhere or vice versa. With Grants of Exploration issued, others will find the Tower and may not have the kingdom’s best interest in mind as they attempt to solve the mystery themselves. Something beyond their ability may be let loose on the Duchy. Precautions must be taken.”

“Ceithre Chinneadh needs to return to the Flan highlanders so it can be restored environmentally and culturally. Salix Springs will benefit by remaining fallow. The hot spring and fen need to be noted on the Royal maps with a moderate threat level to herders and their flocks. I am still awaiting confirmation from the Royal Zoological Society of Rel Mord to what those creatures are. As for the circumstances of Sir Trelack’s misfortune with the ballista-wielding xvarts, I urge you to consider Master Fargrim Foamflagon’s report for further details.”

“Your Loyal Servants, Valotte Gold and Lyr Swifthart”

[13] Homage to Larry Church’s “Secrets of the Towers”, Dungeon #10, pages 34 – 42.

[14] D&D Xanathar’s Guide to Everything, pages 42 & 43.



CULTISTS OF THARIZDUN #3

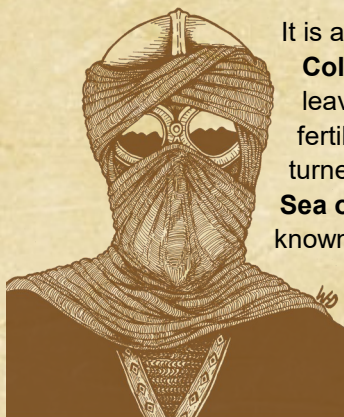
MIKE BRIDGES (MAY 2020)

DUST CUTTERS

Sailors of the Ashen Dunes

By William "Giantstomp" Dvorak

Far and away west of the Hellfurnaces, the lands are a literal post-apocalyptic wasteland of ash. There's little life capable of surviving in this obliterated desert. However, life finds a way. Especially when there's treasure in the offing, and when adventurers hear there's glory to be found. Here, they've learned to thrive as on skimmers built for the ash desert.



It is a well-known fact that the **Rain of Colorless Fire** was a catastrophe leaving devastation in its wake. The fertile lands of the **Suel Imperium** were turned into the wasteland we now call the **Sea of Dust**. However, what is not well known is that under the shifting ash which makes up the Sea of Dust are ruins and hidden riches. Even around its perimeter on rocky mountain slopes are the ruins of that once-proud civilization. After this

devastation, not all the Suel refugees traveled east into the Flanaess; some escaped south.

Most of the Suel that fled south settled just over the **Punpir mountains** in **Zindia**. These Suel brought with them histories of their homeland and its great magic and wonders. After the maelstrom of the Rain of Colorless Fire, the descendants of those original Suel refugees began venturing back to their old homeland land searching for these ancient relics. Most of those earlier explorers perished. However, some few returned with stories and wealth sufficient enough to goad others to take their chances of exploring the wastes.

Soon a community of these explorers began to form in **Satpathar** in the **Raj of Changol**. Here these adventurers gathered and prepared themselves for expeditions into the Sea of Dust crossing over the narrow strip of mountains just north of Satpathar where the Punpir and **Ongial mountains** meet. One of these adventurers came to Satpathar, Urug Kanan, a former sailor who had worn out his welcome on the Vohun Ocean. Urug signed on with one of these expeditions and was fortunate enough to make it back alive. After his first expedition, he began work on the first **Dust Cutter**.

In those days, the bulk of the expeditions into the Sea of Dust hugged the wasteland's borders in the shadows of the many mountain ranges that encircled it. Rarely would they venture into the interior for fear of the shifting ash and the violent storms that could come out of nowhere and bury expeditions

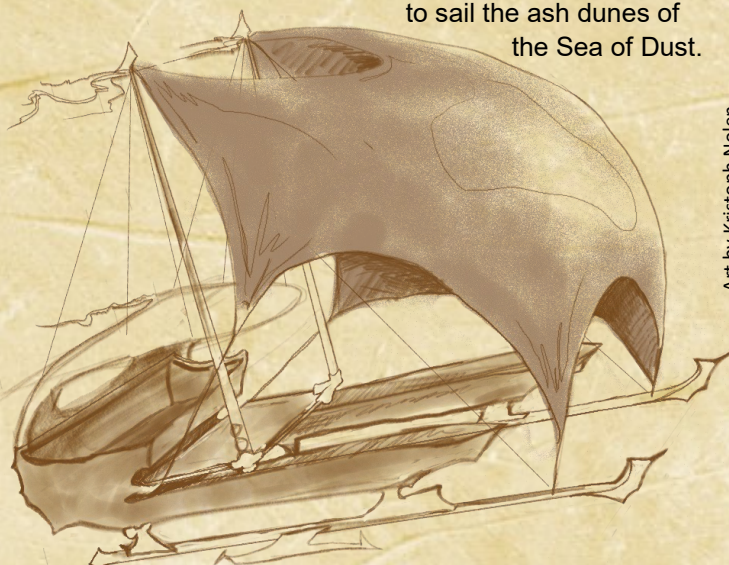
alive in minutes. Urug looked at the Sea of Dust literally like a body of water and began working on a lightweight multi-hulled sailboat that could ply the ash dunes, and be dragged across firmer ground when necessary.

These first Dust Cutters were crude and small, as they still needed to be transported over the mountains to the Sea of Dust. After the first few expeditions using Urug's design allowed explorers to plunge deeper into the Sea of Dust, others began copying his ideas. The term Dust Cutter also became synonymous with the explorers themselves.

Today, modern Dust Cutter operations are very advanced, with unique modular boats and even larger vessels that remain in base camps on the northern slopes of the Punpir mountains. The explorers themselves have devised special headwraps, scarves, and goggles to keep out the ash. Despite these advances in technology, the life expectancy of most Dust Cutters is not long, as the dangers found in that wasteland of ash are still incredibly significant.

But wherever there is the promise of treasure, you will find hearty men and women ready to undergo an expedition for the chance of adventure and glory. Armed with knowledge from the thousands of ancient tomes and texts collected in the Library of Satpathar, some of the wonders brought back these days are truly extraordinary. So wondrous that the Raj of Changol even sends an official expedition into the Sea of Dust every season. It is not unknown for the rare asherati to accompany an expedition serving as a guide or as crew in the interest of trade.

Capable crew members are always in demand for these expeditions and draw adventurers from realms far and wide to sail the ash dunes of the Sea of Dust.



LEGENDS OF THE GNARLEY

Wild Ange and Dunapple

By Les Reno

The halfling bounty hunter known as Wild Ange first made a name for herself some thirty or forty years ago as a member of various adventuring parties whose exploits took them from Verbobonc to the Wild Coast and from the Ulek States to the Pomarj. Having acquired much wealth during her travels, she settled in Fax and established a security business. When Fax fell to Turrosh Mak's forces in C.Y. 584, Ange assisted civilians fleeing the doomed town. While working to help the locals escape, she discovered documents confirming ties between the Scarlet Brotherhood, its Slaver proxies, and the Suel mercenary organization known as the Crescent League. This revelation saved more innocents from betrayal by their supposed "rescuers" and contributed to the collapse of the League's reputation. (For background on the Crescent League, see Andy Miller's "Hidden Agendas" in Dragon #256.)

Following the League's exposure, Wild Ange disappeared for many years. Although some claimed the Scarlet Brotherhood had murdered the halfling for meddling in its affairs, most agreed she had escaped the organization's wrath. Some say she settled in one of the halfling communities within the borders of the neutral Faerie Kingdom of Celene, the elves welcoming her out of respect for her past services to the Crown. Over the years, rumors of her renewed activity as an agent of the Court circulated around table and hearth in taverns and trading posts, but the veracity of these claims remains uncertain.

There is anecdotal evidence Wild Ange now stalks the Gnarley. Villagers and wayfarers in the great forest say they encountered her more than a dozen times in the weeks leading up to recent events around the Blackthorn, and she's been active ever since. Some insist that Wild Ange is acting on orders from Queen Yolande herself and that the halfling's presence hints at a shift in Celene's policy, but given the Court's declared neutrality in matters outside the Faerie Kingdom's borders, this seems unlikely. Regardless, over the past few months she and her occasional associates (noted adventurers from the surrounding region) have relentlessly targeted bandits and humanoids, bringing several of the most notorious criminals and warband leaders to justice. She is rumored to have donated a significant portion of her share of the bounty she earned to benevolent Flan, elven, and halfling shrines and temples. Some of her coins even find their way into the coffers of local orphanages.

Her constant companion since her reappearance is an owlbear she calls Dunapple. While still a hulking beast, Dunapple is noticeably smaller than the average owlbear, leading some Gnarley rangers to speculate that he's an orphaned or abandoned runt reared by Ange during her time in Celene. Dunapple walks and runs both upright and stooped with equal ease, and seems to understand a limited number of signals and spoken commands. He sometimes serves as a mount for the halfling, triggering overwhelming panic in the most resolute villains, when they see the determined bounty hunter drop, weapons drawn, from the back of the raging beast.

Wild Ange's appearance is unmistakable. She's a Tallfellow halfling with piercing blue eyes and close-cropped blondish-brown hair, curly or wavy depending on the day's humidity. She wears leather armor and a broad-brimmed hat of the same material (think of a Lappvattnet).

A DM might consider inspiration to roleplay Ange from Steve McQueen's Josh Randell in *Wanted: Dead or Alive*. Reinterpret Randall as an aging female halfling with a modified hand crossbow, turning heads as she rides calmly into town on the small owlbear she's raised from infancy.



Art by Kristoph Nolen

PALUSERUS - BLACK DRAGON

The Nemesis of the Gnatmarsh

By Paul "ArtharnTheCleric" Jurdeska

Young black dragon, about 50 years old

Description:

Paluserus is a sleek and wiry dragon. He has the usual horns of a black dragon, which protrude from the sides of his head and wrap around, projecting forward. A large frill adorns the upper part of his neck.

He is not yet full grown and is about 12' tall and 60' long, with a wingspan of 60'. He weighs about 100,000lbs (50 mt). He will only be full grown once he reaches adulthood at about 125 years old.

His glossy ebony scales help camouflage him in marshes and forests, and he takes on a green hue when the vegetation around him reflects off his scales. Because of this mirrored reflection, and his habit of hiding in the marshes to ambush prey, he has sometimes been mistaken for a green dragon. Paluserus loves submerging beneath the water and greenery which covers him in vegetation when he erupts into view.

He has a number of visible scars on his flanks from two minor battles with human ships on the Azure Sea from when he travelled north to the Gnatmarsh. These are mostly from ballistae and other large maritime missile weapons.

Background: Originally from the Amedio Jungle, Paluserus moved to the Gnatmarsh when he was driven away by his own mother only a few decades after setting up his own lair nearby (as the dragon flies). From there he moved north out over the ocean looking for a forest or swamp to settle in. He encountered Sea Prince and Keoland ships and learned to respect their fighting ability. He'd only been in the Amedio before, where he and his mother had received tribute from local tribes. The eastern Pomarj and Bright Desert were too dry, thus he happened upon the Gnatmarsh which he found to his taste.

Paluserus now rules over a group of three troglodyte tribes that live nearby and protect the area around his lair; they worship him as a god. Their evil, cruel, and chaotic nature echoes his. They speak a simplified form of Draconic, and refer to him as the Great Black Serpent. Each tribe numbers about 20 - 80 adults with 20% additional juveniles and hatchlings: the Black Serpent tribe (previously the White Stripe tribe, who renamed themselves to reflect they were the first to begin following him); the Broken Fang Tribe (named after their adult initiation ceremony); and the One Eye tribe (named after their current leader). Each tribe guards *roughly* a third of the area which surrounds Paluserus' lair, though the largest has somewhat more territory than the others. Each tribe is based several miles away from the lair (just beyond his regional fog effect), as Paluserus does not trust them to be closer. Were Paluserus to be killed or flee permanently the tribes would quickly fall into fighting each other again.



The lizardfolk of the Gnatmarsh will not be ruled by Paluserus, and would fight or flee rather than do so. Lizardfolk tribes in his area of the Gnatmarsh are aware of his existence even if not where his lair is, since Paluserus has aided his troglodyte subjects in battles alongside them to drive the lizardfolk away or take loot (mainly for Paluserus as tribute).

Paluserus is aware that there are a number of other powers in the Gnatmarsh, but he is still establishing himself and growing to adulthood, and so is biding his time. For now, as long as they do not interfere with or encroach on his area or activities he will do the same. However, ultimately his aim is to be lord of the whole Gnatmarsh.

Paluserus is well aware he is living next to a large and powerful human kingdom in Nyrond, as opposed to the smaller Olman tribes of the Amedio he previously dealt with. As such, he is very cautious and takes a long term approach to his activities. He is wary of calling down a Nyrondean army or swarms of adventurers upon himself if he is too aggressive and obvious. When he has grown to maturity and built his power base in the Gnatmarsh, he would be a great threat to western Nyrond.

Paluserus is quite content having "discovered" the eastern Abbor-Alz is full of ruins and potential sources of treasure, and often scouts out new sources of loot to take back to his lair. For example, returning groups of adventurers who have already done the hard work, and can be waylaid on their way back to the lands of Nyrond, and who are ripe for attacking for their loot. They provide great sport for the dragon as he keeps his hunting and tracking skills sharp.

If the campaign is post Greyhawk Wars, then Rary the Traitor has become aware of Paluserus's exploration of the ruins and contacted him. He has made clear that he has no issue with Paluserus taking any coins as favoured by black dragons, but if he finds any jewelry or regalia then that may

Art Courtesy of Wizards of the Coast

be reported to him and he will negotiate and pay generously in coin for the right treasures. Paluserus trusts this human as much as anyone, which is not at all, but respects Rary's obvious power as an archmage and as ruler of the Bright Desert. If he finds anything, he will have to balance his greed for coins against his suspicions about what the human is looking for. This has also made him aware humans and others may be useful tools rather than just prey. The dragon intends to exploit this more as his strength and cunning grow more formidable.

The Celadon Forest lies to the north of the Gnatmarsh, and is a natural habitat for black dragons. However, swamps are preferable to Paluserus. He has scouted the southern reaches of the Celadon but is wary of the elves and woodfolk there, including the *voatkyn* (wood giants) given the ancient dragon-giant war. He is similarly wary of hill giants in the Abbor-Alz. While the flesh of fey creatures is delicious, he is not stupid and knows the Gnatmarsh is a preferable abode for him. The woodfolk have spied him on occasion and, having been unable to find his lair in the Celadon itself, suspect he is based in the Abbor-Alz or more likely the Gnatmarsh.

Personality: Black dragons are renowned for being cruel and malicious, and Paluserus is no different. He left his mother's lair during the juvenile stage in the usual way, and set up his own lair relatively close to his mother, in the northern Amedio Jungle. However, in time she had need or desire to drive him out, which has reinforced his inability to trust anyone or anything. This includes his troglodyte followers - he watches them and fears they will betray him if given the chance.

Like all black dragons he hunts not merely to survive or to protect his territory, but also for the sheer joy of causing fear and pain. He cares not whether their victims are helpless or hazardous, weak or powerful. Black dragons revel in being an apex predator. He prefers to feed on sentient beings, with fey creatures being a particular delicacy. However, the bulk of his diet consists of swamp creatures such as snakes, alligators, small mammals, and birds. Like some of their reptilian kin, black dragons like to let their prey rot in the mud at the bottoms of swamps because they prefer the texture and flavor of putrefied flesh.

He fights on land only when circumstances force him to do so, preferring to fight either in the water or from the air. He also prefers to ambush opponents rather than straightforward fighting. His encounters with human ships while crossing the Azure Sea taught him respect for humans, their weapons, and spell-casting ability. In any event, his preferred approach is to ambush with his acid breath, and lair actions if in his lair, to strike fear and confusion into his opponents. He is a vicious and ruthless adversary, and his acidic bile can dissolve through the heaviest armor with ease.

He is cunning but also, like most bullies, he can be cowardly. He will tend to pick off weaker opponents in a group first, both for the easy victory but also to strike fear into the others. Though quick to engage in combat, he will readily retreat if opponents prove more dangerous than anticipated. However, it may be difficult to distinguish fleeing from regrouping to attack from another angle. He does not have the disadvantage of living in a heavily wooded habitat, meaning he can fly freely in combat as required once out of his lair.

Paluserus will not fight to the death. If given the chance he will flee, to return when it is safe, or abandon his lair as need be. However, he will have his revenge. Paluserus could well be a recurring nemesis for any group of adventurers.

Location: He has established a lair in the centre of the Gnatmarsh to make it difficult for any outsiders to find or reach him. His lair is located in one of the small areas of raised, dry land in the Gnatmarsh, which he and his troglodyte followers have dug out to provide a warren of tunnels and a chamber holding his small hoard. His hoard is mostly coins, given his preference for coin. The system has multiple chambers, some partly submerged. He can often be found sunning himself atop the hill during the day.

The lair has two entrances, enabling his entrance or exit from multiple areas so he doesn't become trapped in his lair. The main entrance is underwater and hidden under thick layers of vegetation through which he can swim. The other is above-ground, disguised amidst the undergrowth. The lair itself partially flooded, providing pools where the dragon rests, and where food can ferment. The lair is littered with the acid-pitted bones of previous meals and the fly-ridden carcasses of fresh kills. Centipedes, scorpions, and snakes infest the lair, which is filled with the stench of death and decay. The stench of the marsh and rotting prey masks his own scent. It would not be wise to confront Paluserus inside his lair. He knows every inch of the complex and gains great advantage because of this. His amphibious nature is a significant advantage due to the many flooded chambers within his lair.

Paluserus is not yet a legendary black dragon so the area around his lair is not yet warped by his magic. However, this is beginning to start as fog lightly obscures the land within 6 miles of the lair. If he dies, this fades over 1d10 days.

Adventures: Characters adventuring in the Gnatmarsh will likely only encounter Paluserus if they find themselves in the deep heart of the marsh. He might be spied elsewhere and a dragon hunt may ensue, which should not and would not be easy unless they can fly after him.

Lizardfolk encountered or befriended by adventurers might ask for their help in dealing with Paluserus and his troglodyte tribes if they are expanding their area of control. A local druid friendly with the lizardfolk might seek aid on their behalf or in keeping the balance of forces in the marsh. Woodfolk in the Celadon might similarly ask for help finding this potential threat.

The survivor of an ambushed band of adventurers in the Abbor-Alz might seek their aid, with tales of the treasure Paluserus stole from them. A lone survivor from one of his rare attacks on a ship on the Nesser river (or Duntide) might also seek their help in locating him and obtaining revenge, or salvaging treasure. The overstretched local authorities might seek help locating his lair in a proactive attempt to deal with the clear threat of a dragon after receiving reports - tax reductions on any retrieved treasure might replace a bounty, for the cash strapped local authority.

Note that Paluserus does not yet have Legendary Actions available to him, as he is not yet a full grown adult dragon. However, he will still be a formidable opponent especially for a skilled DM making use of his sly personality, ambush tactics, and any advantage his lair and troglodyte followers might offer.

OUTLYING TERRITORIES OF LO NAKAR

A Regional Gazetteer of the City in the Sea of Dust

By Amy “Theala” Crittendon

Lo Nakar is the last city of the Suel Imperium. When the Rain of Colorless Fire descended upon the Imperium in retaliation for the Invoked Devastation, the Mages of Power banded together and did all they could to save the capital. Other cities were defended by lesser mages or single Mages of Power unable to respond to the imperial capital. All of those cities were burned to ash.

Only Lo Nakar survived. This city was defended by a coalition of local mages led by a single Mage of Power, a woman calling herself Asiji, who fled there from the interior. Together, these mages produced a magical shield that protected not only the city itself, but the entire valley surrounding the city. When the Rain finally ceased, every mage involved but two had collapsed from the effort and, wondrously, Asiji revealed herself to be Wee Jas, Goddess of Magic. She installed the last two mages standing as the new Queen and King of Lo Nakar and charged them with the protection of her city and her people as the last vestige of Suel culture. For nine hundred years the descendants of the first Queen and King ... the House of Asiji ... have done just that.

The royal family ... the houji ... have ruled with strength and wisdom, protecting the city, its people, and stands as the last bastion of the once great Imperium. The city has grown and expanded its defenses, ready to defend against any threat. A large area was protected from the devastation wrought by the Rains by the magic of Lo Nakar's defenders as well as the natural terrain. This area was populated when the Rains came by Suel goatherders and farmers who took shelter underground, or barbarians living in the foothills and lower peaks of the Suelhaut Mountains.

In spite of their successes, not all is well in the Lost City. In nine hundred years, the population has grown massively. Though the city's walls grew in height, the boundaries expanded downwards rather than out. Most of the city residents are unable to comprehend the idea of leaving the city's walls. Most, but not all...

Outside the walls, the surviving Suel tribes have also grown and face competition from two other non-Suel human tribes: the Lannur and the Naen. Both are primitive peoples with little technological sophistication. The Suel and Lannur raid one another's territories while the Naen have become increasingly shy and reclusive. These tribes compete for control of a small, restricted area of lands that can support agriculture or mining.

1. **Lo Nakar:** The city of Lo Nakar stands at the tip of a

southern spur of the Sulhaut Mountains. Once an outlying trading post, Lo Nakar became something of a backwater during the Suel-Bakluni Wars. The major pass north through the Sulhauts (near the present day village of Orolai was blocked early in the Wars and remains impassable to this day. Lo Nakar is described in more detail in Nathan “Nellisir” Irving's *Lo Nakar: The Last City of the Suel*.

2. **Orolai:** A mining village in the Sulhaut Mountains. There is a major copper mining operation here, and a smaller tin mine to the west. Approximately 350 people live here. The village dates to the Suel Imperium, but its population has never grown much larger. Most of the inhabitants are slaves toiling in the mines, with a short life expectancy. A handful of families maintain farms in the area to support the mining operation.

3. **Sulnakai:** an agricultural village on the Suelhaute River, southwest of Lo Nakar. The village has a permanent population of about 500 people, though local Suel tribes men come and go to trade at times throughout the year. The village was founded less than ten years ago by settlers who left Lo Nakar seeking to escape the oppressive atmosphere of the city, the lack of resources or opportunities. The village has been a great success, prompting others to migrate to Sulnakai, or to move further out to establish new villages. King Leurik has neither encouraged nor forbidden residents of Lo Nakar to leave the city to establish these new villages. However, the agricultural produce has been a welcome additional source of food for a city straining to feed its citizens.

4. **Ro Zan:** A small village in the north western corner of the valley. Originally the estate of Kalana Zan. House Zan was a noble House of the Suel Imperium, but it was also a front: Kalana Zan is a Greyhawk Dragon who lived among the Suel and witnessed the Rain of Colorless Fire. She left the city when the Rains began, and retreated to her estate near Lo Nakar, where she has lived ever since. Over the years, a handful of city dwellers have made their way to her home to live among the descendants of her earliest servants and now Ro Zan is a sizable village of just under 500 souls. The residents are unaware of Kalana's true nature, and see her as a benevolent protector. The locals practice animal husbandry and farm, and a few families jointly operate a copper mine nearby.

Kanala Zan has a human lover, an Oeridian man named Theron. Kanala has raised an intelligent white dragon named Congelatrix since he was a hatchling.

Congelatrix sees Theron as a father figure, and allows Theron to ride him.

It is the one place in Lo Nakar with no temple or priestess of Wee Jas, though there is a priest of Norebo. Many of the Suel who have come to live here are followers of the other Suel gods who desired a life outside the rigid rules of Lo Nakar and Wee Jas's Temple. However, Wee Jas is still revered by the Suel as their savior, and the Crown is also held in high esteem; Ro Zan's residents are solidly loyal to their Queen and King, though more likely to be openly critical of the aisun or noble class than anywhere else in Lo Nakar.

5. Coularren: Another newly formed village, this one on the northern shore of the Ruby Lake. Its inhabitants are farmers, fishermen, or meet regularly with the Suel tribes for trade. There are approximately 300 families living here on a permanent basis.

Geographical Features of the Valley of Lo Nakar

The valley holds a number of interesting features and resources.

A. Escarpment: To the east is a high cliff, over 1000 feet high in many places, marking the border of the Sea of Dust. One can see across the Sea of Dust for miles. The ruins of destroyed villages or cities can clearly be seen in places. Occasionally adventurers from Ull make their way across the Sulhauts into the Sea of Dust to loot these ancient sites, take note of the green life of Lo Nakar, and venture into the city-state's territory to explore. As most of these adventurers are Baklunish, they are invariably captured and enslaved, or killed, by either the Suel tribes men who venture near the escarpment during the winter, or the regular patrols of the royal army. Non-Baklunish adventurers, however, can negotiate freedom of movement within Lo Nakar's borders ... though they will be forbidden to ever leave.

B. The Rainbow Gate: This mighty falls marks where the Suelhaute River runs over the escarpment into the Sea of Dust. The jaggedness of the cliff face combined with its height creates a spray of water that catches the light of the sun to create a magnificent rainbow effect that lasts through much of the morning and early evening hours. The river falls into a deep crevice at the bottom, and disappears from view, flowing to who knows where. The eventual fate of the river has never been explored.

C. The Ruby Lake: This lake is large enough and deep enough to support a large population of fish. The lake is so called because of a mud flat along the southern border of the lake that is a repository of precious stones, mostly rubies. A number of particularly large and valuable specimens have been found there over the centuries. The area is owned directly by the royal family, which regards the resource as a holy site. Mining by the aisun or commoners is forbidden without a royal grant, and the penalty for being caught mining stones there without a permit is a public execution by drawing and quartering.

D. The Green Sea: A large grassland that extends from the area of Ruby Lake north, west and south to the borders of the valley. The Green Sea is a large, open grassland that is capable of supporting the herds of cattle, sheep, and goats of the Suel tribesmen and Lannur clans. The Lannur mostly cling to the lowlands to the far west, and seldom travel into the open plains. However, bands of gnolls are known to move through the Green Sea, making travel through these areas, which lack roads and refuge, very dangerous to unprotected travellers.

There are occasional wells and shrines found throughout the Green Sea whose creators or origins are a mystery.

E. The Border Wastes: A dry, scorched desert along the escarpment. Very little water is to be found here, except along the Suelhaute River or in rare wells.

F. Utoakwood: A valley within the valley, in the southwestern corner of the region. Seldom visited, this narrow area is the hidden remaining refuge of the Naen.



Cartography by Amy Crittenden

A FISTFUL OF BAUBLES, PART 2

Ancient Whispers in Skrellingshald

By [David Leonard](#)

The Crone cackled, waking Hradji with a start. He surfaced, reeled, and then swayed. He fought the urge to swoon. Get ahold of yourself, he raged. Women might be forgiven such weakness, but not one such as he, the son of a jarl.

That thought alone steeled his blood. He shook off the swoon and anchored himself upon the earthen floor. He inhaled deeply, too deeply for his liking. The closeness of the hovel was thick with her fetid musk. He closed his eyes, then opened them to see her eyes staring mockingly back at him. Even though those milky orbs must reveal only a hint of what might be before her, the aged witch had seen his momentary weakness and she was laughing at him. She would, wouldn't she? He wondered, and not for the first time, why had his father tolerated the wizened "Fist" for so long? She would never be Rhizian, no matter how long she might dwell among them.

"What did ye see?" she asked.

He shrugged. "I don't know, he said. "Things."

She spat into the fire, her spittle hissing in the flames. "Tell me, lest ye misinterpret thy dreams."

Mountains. A city with towers, domes, and spires, all gleaming in majestic golden splendor. Orbs, baubles of agate, onyx, and jade, magical amulets that flowed and pulsed even as they devoured any light that had the misfortune to fall upon them. A blacker void beyond. He said as much, then suppressed a shudder.

"Ye have yer answer, then," she said.

"That is no answer," he fumed. "It's a nightmare brought on by this burning herb."

"Ye beheld a city of great wealth and power, high in the mountains," she rasped. "An ancient city - a magical city. What city might that be, then?" She waited, her query as thick and as harsh as the smoke that watered his eyes and caught in his throat.

"Skrellingshald," he supposed, his disbelief clear.

"Aye," she said, her pleasure stretching her toothless grin almost unto the crevasses that issued from her cold, hard eyes. "Skrellingshald," she said. "*Tostenhca*," she breathed, as though in awe and no little amusement. "What remains, that is."

Hradji shook his mane. "It's nothing more than a myth!"

"Is it?" she whispered, bemused by his scepticism. "No myth; a ghost, mayhap, left to linger to warn one and all against the lord's wrath."

"Lord? What lord?"

What could only be reverence filled her like wine poured into a glass as she said the name, hissing it as if uttered by a snake.

"No myth; a ghost, mayhap", rasped in Hradji's mind's ear. "Beware", she had warned. "*Evil dwells there, greater evil than ye have ever known*".

But would say no more.

Evil? he thought and then scoffed. What did that old fossil know of evil, hidden away in her stinking hut, and blind to all but what the most ashen of images? *Vermin, more likely.* Easily crushed underfoot.

He was not so bold as to deny the danger the kobolds presented. He had already seen enough of them to ensure that he kept a keen eye on the gables and eaves. He and his found their way in Flan-file ever deeper into the narrow warrens of that long dead city, always expecting the snouts of the dragon dogs to be peering back down on him. It proved unneeded, however, since the elf's chosen path had proven true. Their swift passage had escaped all but the steady gaze of gargoyles peering out of the snow overhead, and that of statues staring blankly from long dormant cisterns in each and every open space they dashed across. Only snow-choked pots and denuded brush lurked in the courts of this forsaken place.

How long had it been since another had gazed upon them, he wondered? He imagined children's laughter and their mothers' calls. Greengrocers and silk merchants hawking wares, and the scent of meat roasting on spits. What happened here, that they should flee such a city?

The Crone's cackle filled his ears.

Eight figures hastened through Skrellingshald's ruins, making for the central dome. What might still be had in this desolate place would surely be entombed within, they surmised, all else likely looted long ago by the kobolds and whatever else dwelt here. What, indeed? *Evil has dwelt here*, Fridmund had declared, resurrecting the witch's warning. Its presence was palpable. One glance at each of their faces betrayed as much, and thus, none argued with him. The dome rose higher and higher as they closed with it, its spires steeper with each sighting as they crossed each wide space in turn. Eventually, they spilled out into its vast court and stood at the base of the stair leading up at its towering façade.

Frescos ringed its eaves, showing fields sown and reaped in turn, scribes toiling at tables, and priests revering the rising sun. Its lattice gate lay twisted and rent, discarded in what could only be described as wrath. The lavishly carved doors that once graced its lofty edifice were long awry; marred and defiled. But despite hanging askew on broken hinges their majesty was still plain: Pelor had once reigned here in all his shining glory, but no more. Shadows were

creeping up on its tarnished majesty. And beyond those sundered doors darkness smothered his warm, radiant light.

They mounted the stairs in silence, their footfalls all too loud despite the breath of wind that shifted the snows underfoot, and stood beneath the lintel that had once housed those massive doors, peering within. Shields did little to cut the frozen air wafting out which chilled their souls. Their numb fists gripped axe and sword.

Lanterns aglow, the interior was revealed as their beams swept here and there about the rotunda in their desire to exorcize the terrors which skulked in every nook and hallow.

The dome rose into the heavens, a wide stair climbing each wall to a clerestory of shattered windows, the kaleidoscope of broken leaded glass dappling the bucolic tilework at their feet. Tentacles of snow slithered into the nave from the once palatial atrium.

"I'd hide my treasures in the crypt, if it were me," Cinniúint whispered, his words repeating within, his first single footfall becoming legion. Even a quickly drawn breath leapt back from the walls. He stopped, turned, and smiled, "Let's hope there are none about to hear us, shall we?" None did, or none revealed themselves if they had, as they invaded the ruin. They spread out, each intent on what might be secreted in the shadows, Fridmund's softly sung lyric accompanying them:

*"Is there a man, whose judgment clear
Can others teach the course to steer,
Yet runs, himself, life's mad career,
Wild as the wave,
Here pause -- and, thro' the starting tear,
Survey this grave."*¹

The stairs beckoned. Hradji wished to look upon this once great city before plunging into its depths. He made for them, waving off Gunnar who made to follow.

"I'll be only a minute," Hradji said. "Keep watch."

"Don't," Cinniúint protested tenfold, before Hradji had scaled more than three risers. "It's not safe," he said. "What if you're seen?" he pleaded.

Hradi brushed Cinniúint's concerns aside, and before long he was atop the gallery, and then the terrace, overlooking the dead city in the waning light of day. He inhaled the kiss of winter, felt its bitter embrace. It smelled of coming snow and was colder than it ought to be. Despite the wind, a pall

hung over all he beheld, as still as the tomb it was. Nothing moved as the pale disk of the sun touched the surrounding peaks, and the shadows deepened.

The dragon dogs will stir soon, Hradji thought, reluctantly withdrawing into the confines of the dome. Best to be about the business he had come to do.

He paused before descending, watching as his companions flit from one alcove to the next, from nave to chapel, shifting broken tiles, testing the flagstones beneath, peering behind the buttresses. They pried what they may, until each vestibule was eliminated, and then scaled the apse.

It would be a miracle if they found anything, Hradji thought, as he picked his way through the detritus, his path etched in the layers of dust. The remains of marble tile crackled underfoot as he too shifted what he might - the shards of what remained of pews with their ends blackened by fire or fragments of torn tapestry crumbling to dust. There was nothing to be discovered. Just dirt and shattered reverence.

He scaled the steps to the altar, his hackles rising with unease. There was something wrong. He cast a glance from the altar to the pillars surrounding it. The images of Pelor were unmarked, free of the defilement that could be found everywhere but atop the dais. Indeed, it was still flanked by tarnished candelabra, blackened by ages of neglect. He fingered one.

Silver! Surely these would have been the first items plundered by the kobolds. So, why had they left them? Why had they left the apse untouched? Fear? Maybe the little dogs knew something they did not.

They rapped the altar, felt along its seams and joins, and pried at it. But it and the temple continued to hold their secrets unto themselves, until Scáthú took hold of a scone affixed to a pillar and was rewarded by a *click!* They leapt back when they heard the following low, yet riotous *clack*. Weapons snapped to ready, sinews taut with expectancy as a floor panel unpinioned and lifted and gasped, clattering tiles, stirring the dust to a plume, revealing a winding stair that led into the bowels of the temple.

Hradji inched closer and felt ice tickle his spine as he smelled the exhalation of ages. It stank of stagnation and long decay. He wished he were asea, just then, under an open sky, under the watchful gaze of Vatun, wherever he might be.

Scáthú slipped into its blackness, advising all to await his return. Cinniúint sat, his back to the pillar, outwardly unconcerned. "He'll be back," the Flan said, palming a deck of cards and casting them before him, mumbling an inexplicable phrase as his eyes rolled up into his skull.



What did ye see? Hradji shuddered and turned away. *Magic*, he cursed. Who could follow such an unnatural path?

A moment later, the elf emerged from the darkness.

"What did you see?" Hradji asked.

"Crypts," Scáthú said. "Tunnels. They go on some way." He took note of Cinniúint gathering up the cards that lay before him. "What did you see?"

"I'm not sure," Cinniúint shrugged, not quite suppressing a shiver as he glanced at Fridmund while the skald sang:

*he poor inhabitant below
Was quick to learn the wise to know,
And keenly felt the friendly glow,
And softer flame;
But thoughtless follies laid him low,
And stain'd his name!"*^{*1}

The necropolis faded into the distance, the meager light of the brands they held aloft insufficient to the task of illuminating how large it might be. Pillars rose, arching at their limit. Sarcophagi lined the walls at their base, spilling out of alcoves. Despite the height, Hradji could feel the weight of the temple above press down on him. Dust invaded his lungs, each breath more laboured than the last.

What the hell am I doing here, he wondered, gazing at the sheer number of tombs, not knowing where to begin. He inspected the one closest to him, buried under its veil of dust and webbing. They clung to his palm, his sleeve, his face. He grew impatient and burned them away, revealing the now featureless visage of the once elaborately carved figure beneath. How long had it laid here? Eons, surely. Should he shift the capstone, he pondered, cursing the inevitability of becoming the looter of graves he was destined to be. *Better to burn upon a pyre than moulder in a tomb!*

"What are we looking for?" Ylva asked, her face awash with the glow of her torch.

"A king's crypt, I should imagine," Cinniúint said. Where might that be, Hradji asked? Where it would likely not be disturbed, Cinniúint answered. Scáthú slipped into the darkness, leaving Angnar and Runolf to follow, leading them deeper and deeper into the darkness where light found little purchase, shadows danced, and their footsteps echoed profusely regardless of their care. Chamber after chamber followed, the pillared archways giving way to cobbled tunnels and alcoves without end, then, deeper still, more stairwells yet, and then, claustrophobic rooms bricked with bone, arm bones here, skulls there, amidst which lay yet more sarcophagi. *Did these heathens not revere their ancestors?*

None interested Cinniúint, for he and the elf continued on even as the corridors narrowed, becoming almost

impassable, before widening once more into a chamber as expansive as that first. Arched. Pillared. But devoid of sarcophagi. At its end was an ebon door carved with horrors. Figures writhing in the fold of tentacles that twisted into an unresolved distance, a vague figure in its depths, ominous in its presence.

Ylva clutched her pendant and called on Wee Jas' benevolence. She shivered. "There is great evil here," she said, her eyes bright with apprehension.

Hradji's nape bristled. The Crone's words rose unbidden, no matter that he tried to suppress them. *Evil dwells there, greater evil than you have ever known*. He clenched his axe, and ignored the bead of sweat that trickled down his spine.

Fear is the only enemy, his father had once taught him. *Defeat it, and you will soon discover that courage and grit, and cold steel, is its equal. All bends to steel. The dead cannot walk without legs, the wizard hath no Art without arms, the beast no bite with the heft of the axe buried deep in its skull*. Hradji was calmed by his father's voice. He exhaled, and felt the fear fall from him.

Cinniúint passed a hand before the door, intoned a phrase, and nodded to Scáthú, who set to work inspecting its joins, its latch, its lock; and in a moment, there was an audible rotation of tumblers.

Beyond lay a mockery of what soared above. The mirror of Pelor's sanctuary above, another rotunda greeted them, so vast that its dome arched beyond the reach of the torches. Even the Flan's lantern could not divine its height. Its beam swept back down, darting about without much purchase, then down again, where it revealed a circle of tall, black, fluted columns that disappeared into the darkness above. Beyond those, the walls held the light firm, keeping their secrets close for the time being. The beam danced across the floor. Where the mosaic of the temple above was bucolic and blissful, an epiphany to the grace of the light and bright world, this one defied description. A riot of red, black, and purple streaks and shapes blended, nightmarish silhouettes which scattered even as they resolved in the mind.

Scáthú slipped within as far as the first column, where he waited and listened. Hradji followed. Then the twins, Gunnar and Fridmund, then finally Ylva and Cinniúint. They waited for doom to fall for far longer than seemed necessary, but the unnaturally suffocating silence necessitated such a wait. Their eyes adjusted and the subtleties of design became apparent.

The walls were of deepest purple, with recessed alcoves hung with thick, plush tapestries that had somehow resisted the ravages of time hiding what might lie behind them. Hradji could only stare at them for a short time before nausea overcame him: faceless slaves tormented by mysterious horrors that engulfed them, enveloped them, tore them, and devoured them while their postures writhed in what could only be described as ecstasy.

Was it those foul images that repelled Hradji towards the centre of that dark space, or was he coaxed by some other force? He could not say, but before long he stood before the steps leading up to the dais at its centre, bounded by an

^{*1} Excerpt from "A Bard's Epitaph," by Robert Burns, 1786

altar rail as repellant as the tapestries. Thorny vines entwined with the tentacles of serpentine bodies until one could not say for certain where one began and the other left off. Ebon eyes stared out from both flora and fauna, and seemed to follow him wherever he might go. *A trick of the light*, he convinced himself, even as he tightened his grip on his axe.

More curious by far were the tall candelabra that rounded the altar atop the dais. Half were topped by clusters of black candles, the others by globes of what looked to be agate and onyx and jade.

Beltar's tits, he thought. Those globes were the very image of those he had dreamed while befuddled by the Crone's herbal fire.

He ascended the stairs.

"Beartooth," Cinniúint yelled, taking no heed to what might hear him. "Don't!"

But Hradji was compelled. Even as Cinniúint bellowed, Hradji held one of the oddly familiar nazars in hand. It glowed. It throbbed and burned. But it cajoled as well.

What wonders we shall do, it spoke. Soothed. Caressed.

The air thrummed. Darkness deepened even as a light throbbed above the altar. White hot, it swirled and coalesced, crimson and blackened. Yet icy cold. Like death.

Hradji backed away, missed the first step, and would have fallen had Gunnar not caught his fall.

Features resolved from the haloed light. A furrowed brow. Glyphs above and below black, depthless eyes.

The visage looked at each in turn, settling finally on Hradji.

What doth I see before me?

Hradji risked a glance at Gunnar, and saw that he stood transfixed by the vision before them. *So, it's not just me*, Hradji thought. Then he looked to Cinniúint, and saw fear in

the wizard's eyes. The wizard was slowly backed away, his hands at his satchel and his bandolier of pouches. Hradji took note that the others had fanned out, Angnar shielding the wizard, and Runolf protecting Ylva. He heard Fridmund's lyre. The elf was nowhere to be seen.

Look at me when I speak at thee!

Hradji did as he was bid.

I know thee not. But I have dreamt of one such as thee, come to disturb mine slumber.

Hradji asked, "Is it real?"

Of course I am real!

Cinniúint said that it was, but not in how Hradji meant.

"Speak plain!" Hradji commanded.

Who are you, thief?

Thief? Hradji felt his blood boil. *Fear is the only enemy.*

"Thief? I'm no thief," he said, stepping back into the light. "I am Hradji, son of Glothji. Who are you?"

Nothing. A memory of what was.

What might be laughter resounded in Hradji's mind.

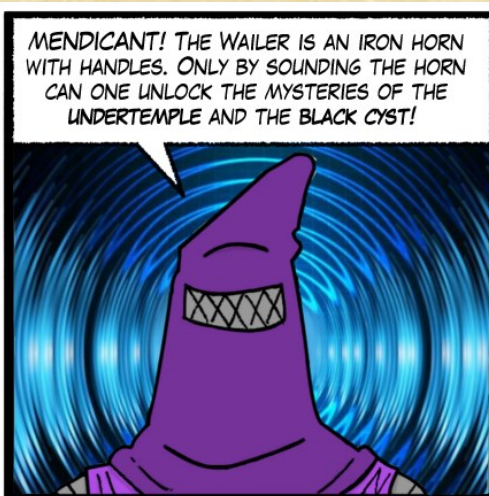
Surely, thou knowest me, thief; else why have thee come hence? Keraptis beeth mine name.

"Keraptis, eh? Aren't you dead?"

To be continued....



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CULTISTS OF THARIZDUN #4

MIKE BRIDGES (MAY 2020)

OMNIPOTENT VIEW

The Kel Avone Retna

By Rich DiIola

At least the Syrloch academy keeps a decent size library here in Hookhill” thought Lord Bresin as he surveyed the shelves containing three dozen books and a like number of scrolls. This was the eighth library that Lord Bresin visited since Lord Colonel Corbin d’Antilles, the Aspiring Sphinx, had tasked him with finding information on the Scarlet Brotherhood. After two months of visiting fellow nobles, who were proud to claim half a dozen books as a substantial library, the few dozen books in this library was a treasure trove of information. Having been raised in a wealthy noble family, Lord Bresin well understood the time and cost of writing tomes and books, a single tome could take a scribe and illustrator over a year. Although knowing the effort required to create a book as well as being a well-learned noble and mage, Lord Bresin Mozhen of House Rholgran of Shibolet, Lord Major of the Virtuous Sword Company of the Gran March and Thaumaturgist of the 3rd Arcane mystery, still did not like researching in libraries.

He thought of himself at his best as a leader of men, and sought to place himself where he could be seen and so inspire others through his noble bearing, impeccable choice in attire, his oratory and his tactical brilliance. But when the Lord Colonel asked for his services in this latest matter, Lord Bresin knew he must do his duty. For such was the constant burden placed upon the Suel; to always put their duty ahead of their personal desires. Normally Lord Bresin would have delegated this research task to others, but the subject matter was too delicate to be handled by those below his level of intellect.

This delicate matter is one that has the Lord Colonel worried. The Lord Commandant of the Gran March had been approached by representatives of the Kingdom of Shar with an interesting proposition. The ambassadors offered their assistance in dealing with the successor states of the Baklunish empire. On the surface, using foreigners to harm the foes of the Gran March permits plausible deniability and seems to only have an upside. But, the Lord Colonel is suspicious of foreigners offering gifts.

“Which is where I come in,” Lord Bresin recalled. “I am supposed to find out anything I can about the Kingdom of Shar, the Scarlet Brotherhood, the Suel houses who founded it, and anything else that might be relevant about these gift-bearing foreigners.”

Pondering his progress so far was not pleasant for Lord Bresin as he had found nothing of relevance except for

rumors, fearful babblings, and speculation. Adding to his desire to succeed was knowing failure to find something of relevance in this library would force him to travel to Keoland and deal with the obnoxiously secretive and hide-bound sages of the Silent Tower. The only piece of relevant information so far were rumors of the Scarlet Brotherhood’s involvement in the lands of the Sea Princes. Rumor had it that after the tyrant luz made an alliance with the Kettites in the north, he approached the Sea Princes to the south with a similar offer. It is said that luz wanted to put foes to the north and south of Keoland to prevent the Sheldomar valley from sending reinforcement to the beleaguered forces of Furyondy during the wars. Unfortunately the Sea Princes refused luz’s alliance offer. The god-king supposedly flew into a rage and in retaliation sent his assassins to slay many of the rulers of the houses of the Sea Princes in a one-night orgy of murder. Slaughtering his foes in a single night seems to be luz’s method of dealing with those who defied or displeased him; Lord Bresin uncovered a similar report which stated luz committed a similar atrocity in the far north during the Festival of the Blood Moon in the ancient lands of the Horned Society. With their leaders slain, the Sea Princes were ready for an alliance with luz, but fortunately the Scarlet Brotherhood offered an alternative. In exchange for their protection against the luzian assassins, the Scarlet Brotherhood would be granted some lands and influence amongst their Suel peers. The remaining Sea Princes saw this as a better alternative than dealing with a maniacal northern tyrant. With that agreement in place, the Scarlet Brotherhood moved troops and naval vessels into the lands of the Sea Princes but so far took little aggressive action against the Sheldomar valley.

The information Lord Bresin had gathered was that the ambassadors from the Kingdom of Shar were skilled in diplomacy and confounding enemy assassins. However, this information was not enough to provide any advice to Lord Corbin on whether an alliance would be beneficial or detrimental to the Gran March. After a few days of fruitlessly searching the newer books and scrolls, Lord Bresin realized the Syrloch’s focus was mostly on means of using magic to assist the Gran March in their military endeavors; very little information was available on politics and world affairs. Switching his focus over to a more indirect line of research, he began looking for anything which would describe how the ancient Suel empire mages used magic in combat. As the ambassadors from Shar claim to be the spiritual descendants of the Suel empire, this insight might help understand the

methods and motivations of the supposedly puritanical Kingdom of Shar.

With this broader way of searching Lord Bresin eventually found a scroll written in ancient Suel which talked about the Order of the Kel Avone Retna. Although his ancient Suel was a little rusty, a quick casting of a spell resolved that minor inconvenience.

The Order of *Kel Avone Retna*, which translates to Common as “the Sorcerer Slayers”, is one of the most powerful tools used by the Houses to compete for supremacy. Many of the lesser Houses without access to mages of great power are still able to participate in the Grand Assembly thanks to the skilled Kel Avone Retna they maintain within their households.

Recent developments have created excellent opportunities for the expansion of the ranks of these skilled artisans of death. The new Emperor, long may he reign, has decreed a celebration of his new reign by permitting a decade of exploitation of the barbaric people to the north of our empire. This provides ample opportunity for practicing skills on lesser non-Suel mages to hone the skills needed to compete within the empire. Perhaps if the ten year experiment on exploiting the Bakluni proves to be a beneficial diversion the Emperor will extend the duration and allow other forms of experimentation and increase the quota for workers that can be harvested.

Seeing as the targets amongst these Bakluni being assassinated are irrelevant amongst our society, the secrecy normally surrounding tasks completed by the Kel Avone Retna is not required. As such, what is normally talked about behind closed doors and speculated on, is now being discussed openly. Already some exciting adventures are being shared in the various taverns of the empire by returning younger mages of this vocation. I overheard the following recount from a member of House Lorinar who practiced his craft amongst the barbarians.

“I scouted out the ramshackle camp of tents and huts using a scrying spell to memorize the layout and a target area for my teleportation spell. I noticed that three of the savages seemed to be magic users of some sort. I waited until the camp settled in for their dinner. The mages retired to one of the larger tents to eat. As they sat down together to dine and drink the swill they call wine, I appeared next to them. In the time it took me to orient myself, one of the mages reacted out of animal instinct and cast a ball of fire in my direction. The ball struck a magical shield I had erected previously and was turned aside. I responded with darts of magical energy striking all three casters in the chest. At this point a pair of

guards rushed into the room screaming and waving their weapons about. I cast a quick spell and put them to sleep. Unfortunately, this allowed the spell casters to regain their wits. All three cast their spells at me. Turns out, one was a cleric of their bestial gods. As before, their spells struck a magical shield and were turned aside. I responded once again with a string of magical darts striking at my foes. Two of the spell casters were felled by this latest onslaught. The cleric avoided the darts and responded by encasing me in a cage of holy energy. With a wave of my hand and a quick cast I easily unmade the cage. These Bakluni are mere novices to true Suel mages. The cleric took this opportunity to try to flee. But this was not to be. As the Bakluni turned to run, I slowed his movements with a spell. Not knowing how much of the camp was disturbed by the noise, I finished the cleric off by efficiently slitting his throat as we’d been taught and left with another teleportation spell.”

Hearing this tale reminds me of my youthful endeavors as a mage, it is good to know that the younger mages have an outlet to test their skills that does not interfere with the orderly running of the empire.

Lord Bresin put down the scroll and thought about the implications. Assuming that one or more of the Suel houses that formed the Kingdom of Shar had members of the Ket Avone Retna within their ranks, it would not be surprising that their descendants would continue the traditional training. This would explain their skill at foiling assassination attempts. Not only would this make the Scarlet Brotherhood a formidable ally, it would also make them a dangerous foe. The Gran March had few defenses against subtle magical attacks as could be attributed to the Ket Avone Retna, particularly if the spells contained within their ranks were from the old empire. Apart from the potential power of their spells, the motivation behind the casters was also of concern. Lord Bresin and his fellow members of the Syroch were taught that magic was to be used to assist and support the men under their command, the rest of the unified army of the Gran March and the population within the rest of the country. Reading about how the mages of the Suel empire used their abilities in such a selfish, wanton and frivolous manner chilled Lord Bresin. If the Scarlet Brotherhood was just as unrestrained in their use of magical abilities, it boded ill for the world at large.

Further investigation on the Kingdom of Shar was definitely required to ascertain their motivations in the proposed alliance with the Gran March. After a few more days researching the rest of the material in the library that was the only piece of lore that Lord Bresin could find that helped in furthering his mission. It looks like he was fated to visit Keoland after all.

CONSTELLATIONS OF GREYHAWK

Corann Rex, Augao, and Gruumsh's Eye

By Andy Miller

Three different stellar phenomena are prominent in the early evenings during Growfest, though in significantly different portions of the sky. They also represent significantly different things, though all three have their importance to different people of Oerth.

The most important star to the festival week, at least for mankind, is of course Augao. Like the other festival stars, Augao is prominent on the southern ecliptic during the week. Though the greenish-blue star is only of the third magnitude, as are all of the Festival Stars, it is easy to pick out in the night sky due to the corona or haze that seems to glow all around it, even more so during the festival weeks. This seems to increase the magnitude of the star though, by all appearances, it is no different than the rest of the year.

Augao

Augao is also (unsurprisingly) connected to Atroa, the Oeridian lesser goddess of Spring, the east wind, and renewal. Oeridian legend has it Augao is the last kara tree seed of those Atroa planted when the world was formed. Instead of planting it, the legend goes, she tossed it into the sky, where it embedded itself in the firmament to become the star Augao. Reverence of Augao is common in her temples, especially during Growfest, usually along the path of the Oeridian migration in Ull, Ket, Bissel, the Gran March, Keoland the Ulek States, the County of Urnst, the Wolf and Tiger Nomads, and the remains of the Great Kingdom. The Temple of the Children in Gradsul, Keoland, and the Trade Wind Chapel in High Mardreth, County of Urnst, both have stained glass windows depicting Atroa flinging Augao into the sky. Even the Temple of Atroa that stood in Rookroost before the coming of luz had such a stained glass window, though it is doubtless been destroyed along with the temple.

It is whispered that a small, fringe group of priests in Rookroost have taken to calling themselves the Augaons and even now work to rid their lands of luz and his troops, they're rallying cry: "We shall grow again!" Whether or not this is true is unconfirmed. If so, the star undoubtedly has great significance to them.



Art by Kristoph Nolen

The stars comprising Corann Rex
- from the "Lexicon of Lesser Astrography"
By Dean Limryl, Grey College Observatory, 591CY

Corann Rex

Corann Rex is prominent and high in the northern sky near the zenith in the early evenings near Growfest. A small, tight cluster of stars of eight white stars of varying magnitudes, the constellation is revered for its seemingly perfect symmetry of four second magnitude stars, two third magnitude stars, and the two first magnitude stars Adamus Major and Adamus Minor. All of the stars in the constellation are white with the two major stars sometimes called the "Diamond Stars" due to their clarity and color. Of all the constellations in the night sky, Corann Rex seems to shine the brightest.

Suloise legend has it that those born under the zodiac signs of Idis or Leonis with Corann Rex strong in their astrological house are destined to be kings, leaders, rulers, or even emperors. Legend also claims the constellation disappeared for a year and a day when the Rain of Colorless Fire fell upon the Empire a thousand Years ago.

The Suloise Empire's Emperor's crown was fashioned after the constellation. This minor artifact was made primarily of platinum and adorned with priceless diamonds the size of turtle eggs. Called "Purity's Cornet" by the Suloise, the crown represented the purity of the Suloise race and its power over all other races. Its powers were unknown, though

it was reputed to have the power to enable its wearer to both read the minds of those around it, control them, and always know when a lie was spoken. Some whisper the souls of every emperor also resided in the crown, advising the current emperor in his rule. The crown was, of course, lost during the Rain of Colorless Fire, though some say it was not destroyed, but merely lost in the Sea of Dust.

Gruumsh's Eye

Gruumsh or Gruumsh's Eye is seen as a Growfest blessing ... or a curse. The blood-red star is high in the southern sky in the evenings of the holiday and makes many feel, when they notice it, that they are being watched. For the orcs, this makes Growfest particularly important and they are quick to point out Gruumsh's Eye stands higher in the southern sky than any other at this time of year. Orcs have great celebrations and debaucheries during this time of year as well.

Though the elves tell tales that Corellon Larethian defeated Gruumsh in battle, brutally removing his left eye. Most orc shamans deny that story. They claim that even before the gods drew lots to determine which part of the world their people would live in, Gruumsh had only one eye and that he always only had one eye.

Where the trouble begins between orcs is whether the star in the sky is Gruumsh's lost eye or his good one. Different orcish priests and shamans view the star differently. Some claim it is Gruumsh's single (or good) eye, gazing down upon his children: the orcs. Others claim it is his lost eyes, placed among the stars for all to see and to fear. Usually, those who worship Gruumsh don't speak of it. Speculation as to which is true has led to no less than 45 recorded internecine wars amongst the orcs in the last thousand years. Smaller skirmishes or larger wars that went unrecorded (except perhaps among the orcs) are uncounted and uncountable, but could be in the hundreds or even thousands. The orcs

have good reason to keep quiet on such scripture.

The elves, of course, say that Corellon Larethian put the eye he plucked from Gruumsh's head where the orc could never reach it, or as a memento of the victory, or perhaps as a joke, or maybe to warn others of the evil of the orcs. Still others relate that Corellon's sword merely cut the eye free and it flew of its own volition into the night sky, where it stayed. The stories vary among the elves. The only thing agreed upon is that the star is the left eye of Gruumsh.

The xvarts sometimes pay tribute to Gruumsh's Eye, it being high in the sky during their week-long mating season of Raxivort's Orgy. Though Raxivort is no ally of Gruumsh, the two gods aren't rivals either, for the most part. The xvart celebration consists of debauchery, feasting, drinking, mating, and the occasional nod to the blood-red star in the night sky. The xvarts think little else of it.

Both Spelljamming craft and powerful telescopes cannot explain the corona or glow that appears about Augao, especially around Growfest. Neither nebula nor tiny stars are near any of the Festival Stars. The mystery of the corona continues to baffle priests, wizards, and sages alike. Ships that venture near Corann Rex report that the brightness of the stars is far greater than any they have ever approached. Many ships that have investigated Gruumsh's Eye have not returned at all. Those that did approach and reported back spoke of an unnerving and unnatural silence and a feeling of malevolence and doom the closer they flew to the blood-red star. Certain ships' crews mutinied rather than get approach too close.

Though seemingly completely unrelated, each of these phenomena represents an important and poignant meaning for different people of the Flanaess. Whether for good or ill, the stars look down upon us all eternally.

Art courtesy of Wizards of the Coast



CLOTHES MAKETH THE MAN

Never the Heroes pt1.

By Mark "Sollace" Allen

illustrations by [Catbat](#)

Fragrant steam rose like mist from a lake as the roaring fire heated the large copper tub before it. Peppermint, pine, and juniper scents swirled about the steaming tub, all coming from the dried herbs and minerals steeping in the tub. Buckets as the buckets of hot water had been added by the short redhead while Hrodulf wearily stripped off his torn, travel worn, and blood-stained clothing. He tested the temperature by submerging a hand into the steaming water and winced slightly as the hot water flowed over one of the many cuts on his hand. He grunted; the water was at a temperature he knew he could tolerate. He stepped carefully over the side, lowered himself gingerly into the hot water, breathing in sharply as he sank his arse into the stew, and leaned back into the bath cloth with a heavy sigh. He closed his eyes as the water flowed over the many cuts and bruises he had accumulated in the last couple of weeks, enduring the temporary pain for the payoff of relief he knew would come from the salts in the bath.

He had left the Elf Mage, Morfindion Kennyr'athem and the Half-Elf Monk, Balan, drinking in the main room of the Inn. In a fight the Half-Elf was useful but the Mage, he was a little too fond of throwing fireballs around and burning their foes to a crisp for Hrodulf's liking. Grimmnr, well... Grimmnr killed cleanly and efficiently and never wanted to share a foe's purse or take a pretty bauble for himself, it was one of the reasons why Hrodulf relied on the huge axe more than he did his companions "Take what is rightfully yours Hrodulf!" his father had said to him as a boy "There's no place for waiting your turn in my crew! Fight and kill for what you want, earn it in blood, keep it through might!". Balan was not interested in wealth which Hrodulf couldn't get his head around. If not for fame and fortune, why fight tooth and nail to build a legend? Morfindion was more interested in books than gold, which was why Hrodulf had managed to build quite a fortune for himself at his companions' expense.

The redhead returned and gathered up the bulk of his clothing. She did not bother to fold it and to her credit did not balk too much at the smells or stains which covered the tunic and trousers. She wadded them into a ball and rested them on the bathing stool next to the tub, then picked up his cloak. She shook the dust and debris from the mantle, the glorious mane of a lion, using a wooden comb to brush out the more stubborn bits of dried-in detritus. The body of the cloak was fashioned from the blood red scales of a dragon, its teeth and those of the lion were set into the necklace he wore at his throat... a Chimera had provided all of these... in fact more

than one, but that had been some time ago now.

Hrodulf sighed again, the pain from the cuts had lessened to an acceptable level and the aches were starting to ease at last as the heavily steeped hot water let his muscles relax.

The redhead hung the cloak from a peg, collected the wadded clothing, and headed for the door. "Do what you can to get the stains out and repair the damage" he called to her as she was about to exit the room "...and I'll have more ale when you return". She looked back at him over her shoulder, nodded once with a kind of a half-smile on her lips and left him to it.

His eyes closed as the heat, minerals, and herbs started to work their magic on his battered frame. Unlike many warriors, Hrodulf fought unarmored. His totem gave him a degree of resilience when he let the rage build within him, his hackles rising and his throat giving vent to a roar not dissimilar to that of a cave bear. Of course, the magic helped too, but he did not tell anyone about that. The incantations he had learned from his father, the former captain of the ship - the *Dragon's Eye* - which had been his home until the man's death. "*Dragon magic!*", his father had told him. Who had Hrodulf been to say otherwise? It worked! But still, his clothing was testament to the fact that blows got through. The many rents, bloodstains, and travelling grime all took their toll on the garments he had worn since leaving *The Dragon's Eye*.

The redhead returned with a large tankard filled with ale. Hrodulf could smell it even over the herbs floating in a muslin bag in the tub and, as most of his body was now submerged, over his own stink too. She left the ale within easy reach on the bathing stool, and turned back towards the taproom.

He watched the hypnotic sway of her hips as she walked. She was not what might be called by some classically beautiful. Her hair was cut unevenly. "She had probably cut it herself," he thought. Her hips were too broad, her breasts too small, her lips wide but thin, and freckles covered her nose



Art by Catbat Art

and cheeks. The clothes she wore were obviously handed down, either from an older sister or another of the girls working in the inn, but she had a smile he liked very much.

"Wait!" he called to her, not using her name as he hadn't even bothered to ask it in the last thirty minutes. She turned and looked at him as he fished a silver noble from the purse sitting on the floor next to the bath. "Help a weary traveller with his back?" he asked, giving her a grin, and running the coin over his knuckles. She looked at his face...at the wolfish grin and he could tell she was weighing the risks against the reward offered ...Silver... as a tip... for just washing his back... He watched as her brow furrowed and he knew she would not agree.

"Sorry sir, I'm too busy in the taproom" she said as she turned back for the door.

He shrugged, dropping the coin to the floor where it rolled in a lazy circle. His weary eyes followed it as it slowly found a place to rest, then spun, like a dog settling into a bed before landing with the crowned head facing the sky.

"What are you looking at with that ridiculous Zilchus' cock-kissing grin on your face" he snarled at the coin and angrily flicked a wave of steadily darkening water over the side of the tub to drown its mocking silhouette. Yet still it grinned back up at him, mocking him, laughing at the scars he wore as badges of honour.

He took a long pull from the tankard. The ale, dark and malty though it was, did little to wash the constant taste of murder from his throat. That was something he had been born into, nurtured by, throughout his childhood aboard his father's vessel, as surely as if he had been at his mother's breast.

Screams of terror and cries of anguish had been the lullabies, which had sung him to his rest. He had been born in blood, baptised in its hot, metallic embrace. He revelled in his partnership with the axe Grimmir and the blood they had shed ever since.

Placing the flagon back on the stool, he washed the stubborn grime from his body. Dried blood and road dust mixed with the fragrant but cooling water, turning it dark as his skin came

clean. Twice his flagon was filled before he was finally satisfied, and he was as clean as he could possibly get from a single tub of water. He rose from the now murky liquid and stepped from the tub onto the hardwood planks of the room.

His clothing had yet to be returned. The Innkeeper had readily accepted his coin and assured him that this would be done as soon as they could be dried and mended. The rough cloth which sat on a small shelf close to the window was clean and smelled fresh, he dried himself on it before returning to the stool beside the tub and draining the last dregs of the ale as he looked around the room. The beams and ceiling were blackened by the soot of many candles and the single window, filled with leaded glass, was a small cyclopean eye in the wattle and daub wall facing the door to the room. Three copper tubs and a large inglenook fireplace dominated the space, each with a small stool beside each tub. Water could be heard from the wooden grate, which stood before the fire., Tthere was no smell, so he surmised the water must be fresh and running at a pace. A culvert of some kind, redirected from the stream which ran close to the inn, served as a drain for this bathing room, and likely the laundry area too.

Red, as he had come to think of her, returned carrying a bundle of garishly colored cloth which she placed onto the stool, all the while trying to look anywhere else but at Hrodulf's naked body. He was not a tall man, no giant like his father, but he was wolf-lean and muscular. His torso, neck and the left side of his head were covered in tattoos, dragons coiled and writhed over his skin. Scars littered his body, some thick and knurled white, others thin white lines speaking of sharp blades.



Art by Catbat Art

"What's this?", he asked, indicating the pile she had deposited on the stool.

"Your... clothes?", she answered haltingly as she moved back towards the door. Hrodulf lifted a tunic, which spoke more of a jester's motley than the simple, functional clothing he favoured.

"These are not mine... Where are the clothes you took away to be washed and repaired, girl?", he demanded impatiently as she moved closer to the door. She opened it, but as fast as a snake, Hrodulf grabbed her arm and pulled her closer to him.

"I said, where are my things, girl?", he said quietly, but with true menace, directly into her ear as the door to the taproom came open.

The girl started to cry, obviously terrified by Hrodulf's actions and by whatever it was that had resulted in the brightly colored costume being delivered to him instead of his own clothes being returned.

"What's all this?!", the Innkeeper called as he made his way from the bar towards the bathing room. "Katja, are you OK Girl?" He signalled to a large man, his peacekeeper, to move with him as he made his way over to where the naked man was holding the girl.

"She's not for sale!" the barkeep bawled across the crowded room as he strode confidently towards where Hrodulf was standing, having moved into the taproom, yet to have relinquished his hold upon the crying girl's arm.

"She is going to tell me what happened to my clothes", Hrodulf growled angrily, the hairs on the nape of his neck bristling in anticipation, in expectation, of violence.

"Let her go!" the barkeep ordered, "I will deal with this!" he said, ushering Hrodulf back towards the bathing room and away from the startled looking patrons in the Inn's main room.

Hrodulf released Red's arm, stepped back into the bathing room and paced like a caged lion, his lip curling, on the very precipice of rage.

"Those are your clothes!" the innkeeper said, indicating the items on the stool and floor, where Hrodulf had discarded them. "they were purchased for you by your elven companion, Morfindion, as yours were little more than rags".

Hrodulf looked at the man, a vein in his temple starting to throb as his anger built further. "So, what has happened to my clothes?", he growled at the Innkeeper as he stopped pacing and faced him, looking unblinking into the man's eyes.

"We... ah, that is to say, your companion, ordered them to be disposed of... burned", he replied haltingly.

Hrodulf took a step closer to the man, "You did what?" he growled, the firelight raging in his ice blue eyes.

"We, ah, well... we... burned them.... But you have these nice new clothes here", the innkeeper gestured at the discarded clothing and looked towards the burly peacekeeper. The man nodded and puffed out his chest as he whacked his club into his open palm with a thwack!

"Look Blondie", the peacekeeper said, "You don't want to be causin' any trouble here, right? It won't go well for you... you'll end up bloody is all I'm sayin'", he, rumbled gruffly with a tilt of his head, a gesture which usually cowed the rowdier patrons of the inn.

"Well, here is what I am saying!" Hrodulf answered, "You burned my clothes...!", he pointed accusingly at the innkeeper. "So, I will take yours instead and you can wear that shit!". He kicked the new clothing towards the innkeeper who backed towards the door and gestured furiously at the peacekeeper who stepped in and swung his club towards Hrodulf's head.

The rage took over and Hrodulf stepped inside the big man's swing, bringing his knee up into the man's gut, doubling him over as the air was expelled from him in a single second. The club the man was wielding dropped to the floor, rolling over to hit the side of one of the copper tubs, as Hrodulf, clapping his hands together, swung his fists down onto the back of the burly man's exposed neck... snuffing out his lights like a candle caught in a strong breeze. The peacekeeper crashed to the floor face first, unconscious, and vomited all over the now even less desirable clothing.

The Innkeeper raised his hands in front of himself defensively and stammered, "But... we... we were only doing as we were told by the elf!", he continued to back towards the door as Hrodulf advanced and seized him by the front of his shirt.

"Wa...wa...Wait!", he cried as Hrodulf drew back

his fist and fired it into the man's face, breaking his nose, and causing blood to gush from it. Three more times his fist landed in the man's face, showering him liberally with blood, before he let the unconscious man drop to the floor and started stripping him.

The man's clothes were a poor fit. He used the shirt as a rag to wipe the blood from his hands, face and chest before discarding it onto the innkeeper's naked body. The trousers were too long. He had to blouse them

over the top of his fine elven boots. He took the man's jerkin, which again was too big for him... and had more than one button missing, so rather than trying to do it up he wrapped it around his lean, muscular torso and cinched his belt tight to keep it and the trousers fastened securely.

Picking up his flagon he walked into the taproom again and sauntered over to the bar. He walked behind it as if he owned



Art by Catbat Art

the place and refilled it from the hogshead sitting on the back wall. He could see Morfindion and Balan sitting together at a table close to the fire and every single eye in the taproom was on him as he returned to the customer's side of the bar.

"You and me!", he said gesturing at the Morfindion with his flagon, sloshing ale onto the floor. "We will have words about this!" he said and took a long drink.

The door to the Inn crashed open and a dozen heavily armed and armored guardsmen came in followed by their Captain, a well-built man with a waxed moustache, Captain Fahrda, an oily prick who had thought to get the better of

Hrodulf once before and failed. Behind the Captain stood Katja, who must have summoned him and his men as soon as Hrodulf had let her go. The guards were professionals, they all stood well back out of Hrodulf's possible reach. "You!" the Captain called, levelling his longsword at Hrodulf, "You degenerate bastard! You and your friends", he said pointing Morfindion and Balan out to his men. "You need to come with me...I have a job for you! And don't cause a fuss you piece of shit or I'll have the three of you lynched here from the roofbeams, and you know I have the manpower to do it this time!"

From the Author: My thanks go out to Ben, Steve, and Rich. For bringing me into the world of Greyhawk and keeping me there with them for the last 35 years. You guys are the real heroes

A SPRINGTIME CUSTOM OF THE RHENNEE

A Found Coin Shines Brightest of All

By Kristoph Nolen

Ahh!! So, gadjo! I see you've come to see your good and faithful gypsy friend Meritaelen, seeking information, eh?! As I always have, I shall answer your questions and share tales told by my people, the Rhennée. What paramisi can I tell you this eve? Festival Customs, you say? Yes, I can tell you of our superstitions when Celene is full!

I'm sure you know the Rhenfolk don't follow the same customs as many of your people. Ah, but do you know that though we do not submit ourselves to the gods as you do, there are still yet a few times our celebrations coincide! And the beauty of Celene at her fullest is one of them!

There are many times and reasons the river folk will raise a tankard of wine - because it's Freeday or it's Moonday; because the sun is up or the sun is down, we need to cheer and relax, because the work day is done, or just because it's cheaper than tithing! But, one thing that is almost always true - there are superstitions that pervade every celebration, and the time you call Growfest is no different.

It is a time celebrating the fullness of Spring. Atroa has adorned Beory with greenery and flowers in her hair, and the folk of the water look forward to this time of growth! For it is then that they are able for the first time in many moons to travel and live in the open air without being bundled against the weather.

The sun is bright, the air is sweet and the very moon herself beckons us to thrive in the coming months!

That hopeful longing for prosperity brings one of the most notable customs of my people. We normally share everything amongst our people, but when a barge it out by itself, a windfall of good fishing, of fair winds, or other good fortune is considered *baxt* - good luck.

The more good omens acapooof a barge finds, the more and more favorable things will come their way. *Baxt lev shtrekja* - good luckpulls in a run of good luck to itself, or the luckier you are, the luckier you get.

Born of the custom of dividing and sharing amongst ourselves brings a custom much like your customs of secret gift-giving on your holidays. We Rhennée will take a coin or small stack of coin and tightly wrap it in a bright red cloth. Then, it is hidden out upon the Waters, where it will be found by other barge captains. Often a branch overhanging the lakeside or river shore will have a small red bundle tied up dangling from it, and it is a challenge for the finder to get to it.

It's considered more favorable when they're somewhat more difficult to find, but, since the point is for them to be found and to give other rhenfolk a seed of *baxt*, they aren't hidden impossibly or anything like buried or truly secreted.

If the red sachet contains a stack of coins, it is considered customary for the *capo* of the barge or the person who first spotted it to take a single coin and hide it again for someone else from another barge to find. Not only is it considered fortuitous to *find* these sachets, it's considered obligatory to pass on the single coin - not doing it is seen as extremely *bibaxtalo*, terrible bad luck, to not do it.

So, you see *gadjo*, there are unusual customs of the Rhennée which are completely unlike your own. Because the river folk don't commonly share these bits of our culture, you can consider yourself privileged. You now know something more of us, and you too can run up your own *baxt* and *shtrekja* by leaving Growfest coins for the Rhennée to find!

That is bound to bring good luck into your life!

SCHOLARLY SELECTION OF SUEL SECRETS

A Sample of Ancient Magical Tomes

By Mike “Greyhawk Mike” Bridges

The town of Seltaren in the Duchy of Urnst is home to Octavus Marius, descendent of Lord Jon Marius the founder of the Seekers, an semi-secret society of sages and adventurers dedicated to finding and collecting ancient lore and arcana across the Flanaess. Marius’ mansion is the oldest, most revered Seeker lodge for it houses their grand library, which reputedly contains rare Suel artifacts and tomes, many unheard of in the greatest libraries of the Flanaess. Because of this attraction, interest in the Seltaren library has extended to other notable loremasters, most of whom have paid a price to gain access to the private collection.

All the books presented below are found in the Seeker Grand Library in Seltaren either as originals or copies. Only copies of these rare tomes will ever be found outside the Seeker lodge. Thematically, every book featured here is written in Ancient Suloise. In the event any first-copy tomes are later translated to the Common tongue they will be worth one-tenth the suggested price of the copy. All game mechanic suggestions in this article are intentionally system neutral, so it is up to each gamemaster to determine their own bonuses for players who use these rare books.

Okalasna

By Zellif Ad-Zol in 5073 SD (-443 CY)

Copied by Xia Melthari, First Librarian of Hesuel Ilshar, in -406 CY

Suggested Price: 9000 g.p. (original), 2250 g.p. (copy)

Physical Description: The covers of this book are dark brown leather, measuring 7” x 10”. The crest of the House of Ad-Zol is embossed in the front cover and the title is done in gold leaf. There are 184 pages with numerous hand painted border decorations depicting flora and fauna, as well as a few full-page hand-drawn maps of the lower Flanaess as it was before the Twin Cataclysms.

Contents: The title “Okalasna”, translated from Ancient Suel, means “forever”. The travelogue begins as a diatribe by the author Zellif Ad-Zol, the son of the last emperor of the Suel Empire, denouncing his father. The work reveals an untold history involving the political climate of the empire during the Baklunish-Suel Wars, which led Zellif to spurn his birthright and take his loyal followers on an arduous journey into the east.

The bulk of the book is a record of many years of travels and discoveries by Zellif’s group. It contains many notes and drawings regarding new plant and animal species, most of which are found in the subtropical regions of the Vast Swamp and Tilvanot Peninsula. Okalasna ends with Zellif’s vision for a better Suel society far removed from the depravity of their homeland as well as his stated desire to next explore the roof of the world.

Game Mechanics: Readers who reference this travelogue may gain a suitable bonus to skill checks involving subjects of nature, herbalism and geography. The work can also aid in history checks involving the former Suel Empire and the present-day domain of the Scarlet Brotherhood.

Historia Imperialis, Volume 230: The Fall of House Neheli-Arztin

By anonymous author (likely a Suel historian during the reign of Inzhilem II) in 3166 SD (-2350 CY)

Copied by Otto of the Circle of Eight, Free City of Greyhawk, in 580 CY

Suggested Price: 8000 g.p. (original), 2000 g.p. (copy)

Physical Description: This dry historical work is bound in small brown leather covers measuring 6” x 8” with the title inscribed fully in gold leaf. The volume number is inlaid in gold on the spine. The book is 423 parchment pages (446 pages originally) with repeating scroll work in the margins and gold-painted initials starting each chapter. There are no other illustrations or maps.

Contents: This very rare volume chronicles the rule of Emperor Inzhilem II of the House of Neheli-Arztin. Inzhilem II is also notable for being the fifth known Suel Mage of Power. The latter part of this historical work records a period from -2400 to -2354 CY, when the Suel Imperium was embroiled in a series of border wars with the forces of the draconic Fiery Kings who once laired in the southern Crystalmist Mountains (present day Hellfurnaces).

A controversial chapter in Historia Imperialis reveals that in -2360 CY, Inzhilem claimed divine guidance in planning the creation of eight magical orbs to defeat the Fiery Kings. To this end, the emperor sacrificed and experimented on many captured dragons, while tasking the Imperial Congress to keep producing expendable wizards to assist in his dangerous project. The subsequent chapter is partially torn from Historia and resumes with a short account of an internal

feud within the House of Neheli-Arztin in -2354 CY. The work accentuates the slaying of Inzhilem II and the eradication of the partial house of Arztin by Neheli who crowned Ubrond Thrideen ("Third-Eye") as emperor to end the tale. The status of Inzhilem's infamous artifacts and the outcome of the war against the Fiery Kings is surely covered in the next volume.

Game Mechanics: Any reader who consults this book may gain a suitable bonus to skill checks involving ancient Suel history or draconic lore, particularly the origin and powers of shadow dragons. In addition, the volume is a sought-after, but incomplete source of arcane knowledge on the creation of Orbs of Dragonkind and their intended properties. However, no information can be ascertained from this work regarding their means of destruction.

The Journal of Mystical Calamities

By Archmage Lendore in 5093 SD (-422 CY)

Copied by Allara Drenus, court mage of Lo Reltarma,

Lendore Isle in -250 CY

Suggested Price: 13,000 g.p. (original), 3500 g.p. (copy)

Physical Description: This small book measuring 6" x 9" is crafted in soft light brown leather with the title laid out in gold leaf above the arcane glyph of Lendore. The Journal is 218 parchment pages of ornately painted initials on gold fields, top and bottom margin scroll work and numerous gold leaf illuminations depicting the prophetic events recorded within.

Contents: The Journal is the only surviving testament of Archmage Lendore, arguably the greatest diviner in the Suloise Empire before its ultimate downfall. His prophetic works are largely unknown outside Lendore Isle, where he brought his loyal followers to escape a foretold cataclysm. In his book, Lendore recorded dozens of dire portents and warnings (in no particular chronological order), mostly involving the Baklunish-Suel Wars, during which his visions were generally disregarded or suppressed by the emperor and his Mages of Power.

Even before the Twin Cataclysms came to pass, Lendore was also a scholar of great magical disasters throughout history. The earliest entries put down in the Journal of Mystical Calamities are his divinations and research into forgotten realms and eras beyond imagining. Here, he ponders glimpses of events such

as the blight of the Bright Desert, the sinking of the Isles of Woe, the cursed Land of Black Ice, Darnakurian's Doom, the Great Upheaval, and the Battle of Pesh.

Lendore's last recorded vision involves an uncertain "Final Calamity" for which he gives one last warning for his followers to escape through the enigmatic Gate of Glass.

Game Mechanics: Any character who references the Journal should receive substantial bonuses to skill checks involving history and geography pertaining to a variety of races and cultures. A reader who uses the divination school of magic may also learn methods to enhance the reach and veracity of their own spells. Possessing a copy of this book or quoting passages by the author can effect charisma-based checks while interacting with citizens of Lendore Isle.

The Black Ledger

By Vexxus Maure in 275 CY

Copied by Lord Jon Marius, Founder of the Seekers, Seltaren, Duchy of Urnst in 376 CY

Suggested Price: 4000 g.p. (original), 1000 g.p. (copy)

Physical Description: This large book has two clasps on an unadorned black leather cover measuring 10" x 12". The interior covers are lined in black velvet and there are 528 vellum pages with an attached silk bookmark.

Contents: The Black Ledger is a very rare look into the secret history of early Urnst society. The author of this notorious tome, archmage Vexxus of the doomed House Maure, was once in charge of all manner of business dealings for his eccentric family, from commissions to craft magic items to trafficking in common trade goods. The Black Ledger however is infamous for it contains old records on illicit trade, smuggling routes and black-market contacts dating back to the decline of the Great Kingdom of Aerdy. Vexxus was also a consummate spy and scoundrel; his work lists scandalous information on scores of influential Urnst citizens detailing everything from political bribes to extortion schemes.

Game Mechanics: The original book was said to be magically warded. A character who manages to access this tome can gain a bonus to skill checks concerning local history and the appraisal of luxury goods and magic items. Those reading the book might also learn



Art courtesy of Wizards of the Coast

methods of deception and persuasion that will provide temporary bonuses or after practice, possible permanent enhancement. Careful examination of the information within may also give hints to the debauchery of House Maure and the inner workings of their castle dungeons. While much of the content in this book is now outdated, many Urnst nobles would do anything to keep these scandals from ruining their Houses' reputation.

Tome of the Scarlet Sign

By Kevelli Mauk in 5091 SD (-424 CY)

Copied by anonymous in 5097 SD (-418 CY)

Suggested Price: (original in the Scarlet Brotherhood), 12,000 g.p. (copy)

Physical Description: The Tome is bound in reddish-brown leather covers measuring 7" x 10" with no visible title on the front or spine, only the large symbol of the Scarlet Brotherhood embossed in the center. The book is 346 parchment pages and makes use of extensive gold leaf decoration and wood cut prints depicting Suel deities and idealized Suloise heroes.

Contents: The Tome of the Scarlet Sign is the repressive manifesto of the Brotherhood of the Scarlet Sign, penned by its founding leader Kevelli Mauk, shortly before the fiery fall of the Suloise Empire. After the Brotherhood narrowly escaped destruction, they migrated east to establish a new domain. Mauk had his Tome recopied a dozen times to be kept in the possession of the society's ranking members. From these copies, the Tome's tenets of Suel purity and supremacy eventually became memorized and taught to successive followers of the Scarlet Sign.

Each of these copies were dutifully kept and passed down for centuries, but in recent decades, faction strife and the exposure of the Scarlet Brotherhood during the Greyhawk Wars, has led to a few of these copies discreetly moving outside the Tilvanot Peninsula and into circulation across the Flanaess. Kevelli's original Tome of the Scarlet Sign is said to be locked away in a hidden vault only accessible by the Father of Obedience.

Game Mechanics: Any reader who is fortunate enough to reference this book will gain a suitable bonus to skill checks involving Suel history and the dogma of Suloise religions like Wee Jas and Syrul. If this infamous book is seen in a character's possession, it will grant significant bonuses to any charisma-based checks when dealing with high-ranking members of the Scarlet Brotherhood. Conversely, use of the Tome of the Scarlet Sign can result in penalties to Charisma-based checks when interacting with cultures who oppose the hateful legacy of the Brotherhood.

Oath of the Scarlet Sign

By Reshek Nes in 5105 SD (-410 CY)

Copied by anonymous Scarlet Brotherhood monks, circa 5125 SD (-390 CY)

Suggested Price: 14,000 g.p. (original), 3500 g.p. (copy)

Physical Description: This slim 280-page work is bound in 8" x 12" dark-red leather covers with a gold inlaid title and an embossed Scarlet Sign. The interior pages of the manual are illuminated with diagrams, anatomical charts and dogmatic symbols.

Contents: This is a training manual written by Kevelli Mauk's successor Reshek Nes, carrying on the legacy of the still nascent Scarlet Brotherhood. In the Oath, she created a monk-like regimen for her students to follow that focused on improving both physical and mental strength through puritanical discipline. While highly valued by collectors in the Flanaess, a sage of Baklunish monastic traditions will find the Oath of the Scarlet Sign rather derivative.

Game Mechanics: Any character who uses this manual can gain a suitable bonus to skill checks involving religion, intimidation and medicine, including the anatomy of humans and a selection of common sentient races. A reader of the Oath may also gain temporary bonuses to certain strength or dexterity-based skill checks, that with enough practice may become permanent. Since there have been several centuries of refinements based on this seminal book, the Oath of the Scarlet Sign cannot teach a reader any features or supernatural abilities of the monk character class.

Legacies of the Suloise Imperium

By anonymous author, circa 4316 SD (-1200 CY)

Copied by Otto of the Circle of Eight, Free City of Greyhawk, in 582 CY

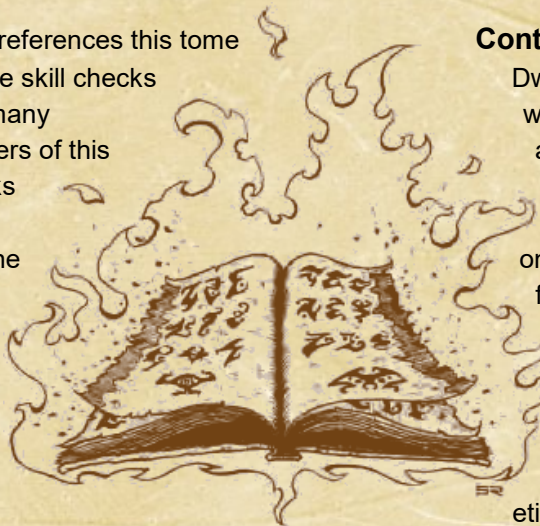
Suggested Price: 4800 g.p. (original), 1200 g.p. (copy)

Physical Description: Measuring 9" x 11", the covers of this heavy book are a strange gray hide, bound with brass fittings and two brass clasps. There is no title on cover or on the spine. The interior is 436 vellum pages, including the title page written in a ghastly green ink. There are numerous illuminations of haunting creatures and grisly anatomical sketches.

Contents: Legacies of the Suloise Imperium is both a comprehensive treatise and an indictment of the deplorable actions of the Suloise Imperium. The unknown author chronicles three millennia of breeding and magical experimentation on innocent people, conducted in secrecy on the orders of the Imperial Congress. Legacies implicates entire dynasties efforts to create a wide variety of new slave-

ances for a host of foul purposes. The results of scores of experiments are detailed in this gory tome, but among the successful entries are creatures of previously unknown origins such as the derro, skulks and su-doppelgangers.

Game Mechanics: Any person who references this tome can gain suitable bonuses to knowledge skill checks concerning the nature and abilities of many uncommon humanoid creatures. Readers of this book can also find benefit to skill checks involving intimidation and medicine by studying the book's many diagrams. The tome is only a survey of the secret programs, as such it does not record any specific procedures or arcane formulae to re-create the creatures in the book.



Handbook of Style and Dweomercraft

By E.M. (believed to be Elluvia Maure), in 226 CY
Copied by Jallarzi Sallavarian, Circle of Eight, Free City of Greyhawk in 578 CY
Suggested Price: 2800 g.p. (original), 700 g.p. (copy)

Physical Description: This book is rather light at 162 pages, measuring 5" x 7" and bound in brown leather with a single delicate brass clasp. The title is inlaid in gold on the

cover and along the spine. The handwriting in the book is done in an elegant, flowery style and is accompanied by several illuminations of wizardly outfits (mainly female) and designs for rods, staves and wands.

Contents: The Handbook of Style and Dweomercraft is reputedly one of many works attributed to the eccentric Suel archmage Elluvia Maure. Contrary to literary rumor this is not a spell book, but instead a remarkable dissertation on wizardly fashion combined with functionality of spellcasting. The Handbook gives the reader practical tips on choosing and carrying accessories like scrolls, spell books or arcane foci while traveling. The latter part of the book is instruction on courtly etiquette concerning the use of magic and how to cast spells in a discreet and sophisticated way.

Game Mechanics: Spell casting characters who read the Handbook can potentially get a bonus to skill checks involving crafting and identifying certain magic items or spotting spells being cast subtly. Those studying the book can also gain temporary skill bonuses to charisma-based skills like diplomacy or performance, which given enough practice could become permanent.

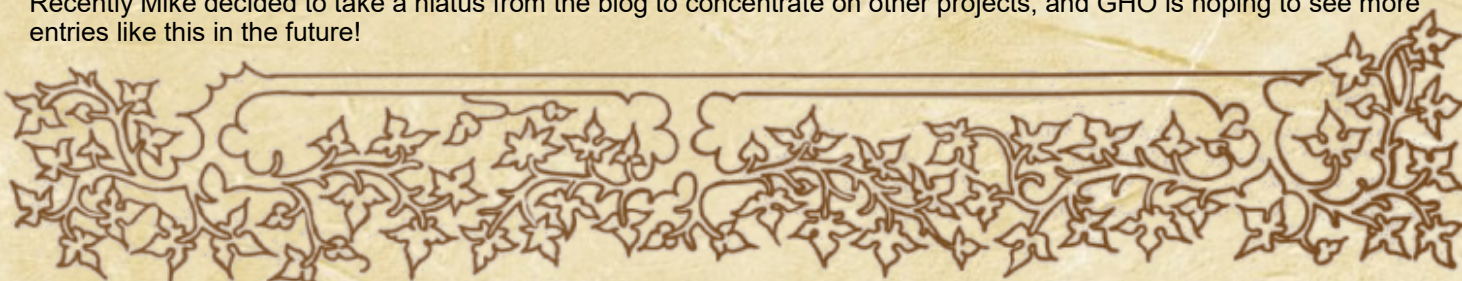
Published Sources:

- "The Scarlet Brotherhood" Sean K. Reynolds
- "A Guide to the World of Greyhawk" Gary Gygax
- "Maure Castle" Dungeon #112. Robert J. Kuntz & Gary Gygax. Additional material by James Jacobs & Erik Mona
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- "Living Greyhawk Gazetteer" Gary Holian, Erik Mona, Sean K. Reynolds, Frederick Weining
- "The Seekers of the Arcane" Oerth Journal #25 Gary Holian & Rick Miller
- "The Orbs of Dragonkind" Dragon Magazine #230 Roger E. Moore.
- "Legacies of the Suel Imperium" Dragon # 241. Roger E. Moore.

About the Author

Mike Bridges is a popular blogger in the Greyhawk community. His "[Greyhawkery](#)" blog, has been active since 2010 but Mike has been active in the Greyhawk community since the 90s. Mike has made 1,000 posts over 10 years.

Known aeons ago in the far-off, mythical realm of "IRC", was known as "Mortellan". When he became a livestreamer doing a talk show, *Legends & Lore* with Anna Meyer, he began going by GreyhawkMike. The show continues to be popular as does Greyhawkery, and both cover in-depth looks at GH and are incredibly useful tools. Recently Mike decided to take a hiatus from the blog to concentrate on other projects, and GHO is hoping to see more entries like this in the future!



FIGHTING MONKS

Monastic Orders of the Flanaess

By Phalastar Greycloak

The martial monastic orders of Greyhawk - like the monks they produce - have long been an enigma to the population of the Flanaess living outside of the lands of the Scarlet Brotherhood and the Baklunish West. The origins and histories of these orders are only known to the orders themselves and a small handful of learned sages.

History of the Martial Monastic Orders of the Flanaess

Prior to the Twin Cataclysms

The clergy of **Xan Yae** (known as the D'ai Shaton) state the Baklunish monastic traditions started when an elite group of the clergy of **Xan Yae** was selected to become the ultimate disciplined warriors. This group became known as the Dai'Shatain and developed a complicated form of unarmed combat known as Da'Shon (Falling Hail). The Dai'Shatain formed into two main orders prior to the Twin Cataclysms – the Order of the Black Lotus and the Order of Twilight's Shadow. Both orders were devoted to **Xan Yae**, providing both agents and temple guards for the church of **Xan Yae**. These orders had been in existence for many hundreds of years before a man named Zuoken (who eventually became a deity) joined the Order of the Black Lotus and rose to become their greatest member¹.

After Zuoken successfully passed a series of remarkable tests, **Xan Yae** granted **Zuoken** divine power, and he was raised to the status of a deity.

The Order of the Black Lotus, initially delighted their foremost member had received such recognition, was then torn apart as the membership split into two factions – those who still revered **Xan Yae** as the foremost deity of the order, and those who now chose to revere Zuoken as the primary deity of their order. The latter group, while remaining completely respectful of **Xan Yae**, left and formed a new order inspired by Zuoken – the Order of the Iron Fist. This order was considered by some clergy of **Xan Yae** to be upstarts and radicals, but for the most part the split created no lasting animosity. Over time the newer order took the art of Da'Shon in new directions inspired by Zuoken and they became a large and powerful order.

During this time, the Order of Twilight's Shadow remained loyal to **Xan Yae**, and while respectful of **Zuoken**, remained purely dedicated to **Xan Yae**.

At this point in time all Baklunish orders had a religious association with either **Xan Yae** or **Zuoken** and this remained a characteristic of Baklunish monastic orders for a long time.

It is not clear if the Suel Imperium had their own monastic orders prior to the one developed by the Scarlet Brotherhood. It is possible the original Suel Empire encountered monastic orders through trade and exploration. Certainly, the Suel

encountered (and fought against) Baklunish fighting monks. However there seems little evidence of Suel fighting monks or monastic orders prior to the establishment of the Scarlet Brotherhood on the Tilvanot peninsula, post the great migrations.

Post the Great Migrations

During the great migrations following the Twin Cataclysms, the Baklunish moved to new areas of the Flanaess. They began to interact with, and in some cases intermingle with, other races, notably the Flan and Oeridian. During these years, defectors, rebels, entrepreneurs and recalcitrant upstarts who had attained significant skill (typically as masters of Da'Shon) as members of the three ancient Baklunish orders, left those orders to form their own independent orders and schools. This did not always occur peacefully and many of these 'splitters' were tracked down and imprisoned or in some rare cases killed. However, some who headed East either escaped detection or found refuge with new and powerful benefactors able to protect them.

As these individuals created their own orders and monastic schools there were two distinct impacts. First, many of these new schools and orders were open to a wider group of non-Baklunish students and from this we can see the origin of what are now termed the 'open orders' – schools with less restrictions (particularly on race and religion) on potential applicants. The second impact was that the fighting style of Da'Shon began to evolve and change.

Around -411 CY, the Scarlet Brotherhood began to develop their own method of unarmed combat when Reshek Nes, the most promising student of Kevelli Mauk (founder of the Scarlet Brotherhood), is credited with creating a strict monk-like regimen to build strength and focus through discipline. This began after Kevelli Mauk's death in 5105 SD (two hundred years before the founding of the Kingdom of Aerdi)². Over the following centuries this method was further refined and expanded, with the Order of the Scarlet Sign becoming a formidable and ambitious order focussed on the establishment of Suel racial supremacy.

It was also during this period a religious order of Flan warriors formed, devoted to the teachings of Zodal. This order became known as the Benevolent Brotherhood of the Merciful Hand and while originally Flan in origin, the order accepted any race of applicant who demonstrated devotion to Zodal and his teachings. Primarily they were a force for benevolent protection aimed at defending oppressed populations from cruelty. Their focus on mercy was reflected in the unarmed combat method they developed, which focused on holds and throws.

Modern Period

Over hundreds of years the open orders and schools became far more widespread as orders continued to branch and split,

taking their knowledge far and wide into new lands and developing new fighting styles and philosophies.

Many scholars believe the Order of the Scarlet Sign is probably the largest single monastic order extant in the Flanaess, but this is hard to verify given the secrecy of the Scarlet Brotherhood – even the small handful of defectors seem unsure of the number of members of the order serving as the most senior element of the ruling triad of that mysterious nation.

The next most significant orders are certainly the three ancient Baklunish orders, which remain powerful and prestigious - if not politically influential - in the Baklunish West. Although the three ancient Baklunish orders remain the strongest and most preeminent monastic orders in the Baklunish West, many smaller orders also developed in these lands, including the first non-religious Baklunish orders. While there is significant competition between the three main religious orders for status, they all remain respectful of the Church of **Xan Yae**. These original schools tend to view the non-religious monastic orders as lacking proper divine guidance and therefore unworthy. Since most of the other schools are small this rarely results in open conflict, however there is continuous tension with many of them and, in some cases where the stated purpose of the smaller orders is in direct contravention of the religious edicts of Xan Yae (or sometimes contrary to Baklunish customs), there is outright hostility.

It is difficult to estimate the number of individual monastic orders now spread about the Flanaess. There are probably many score of new orders, but these mostly consist of only a single school often in a remote location.

Monks and their unusual abilities are still something of a mystery to the wider general population, outside the Scarlet Brotherhood and the Baklunish West.

Structure of a Martial Monastic Order

The larger orders tend to be more complex in hierarchy and structure.

Martial monastic orders are typically led by a single person referred to as a Grandmaster (or numerous equivalent cultural titles). This person is typically the highest authority of the order. They are also often amongst the oldest members of the order and so they are rarely the most physically proficient.

Some highly structured orders have a guiding council of senior members who provide advice and counsel to the Grandmaster. This is known to be the case in the ancient Baklunish orders, while the Father of Obedience seems to have full authority within the Order of the Scarlet Sign.

The generic title of Master is attributed to any monk

accomplished enough to have attained a significant level of mastery in the martial art. Such masters typically provide instruction and guidance to other members of the order and are treated with reverence and respect.

Below Masters are members who have attained a sufficient level of mastery to be called Instructors. This does not mean they are Masters, but rather that they have attained sufficient knowledge that they can instruct other members of the order in specific areas of training.

Orders with a strong religious affiliation (like the ancient Baklunish orders) often have clergy who instruct students in the religious teachings deemed necessary to reach the higher levels of understanding. It is known that many of the clergy of **Xan Yae** and **Zuoken** are also fighting monks.

The Scarlet Brotherhood's monastic order however keeps their membership strictly to fighting monks, to maintain the authority and supremacy of the order within the leadership triad. The order has specialist monks who teach the doctrine of Suel purity and racial superiority.

Smaller monastic orders typically have a Grand Master who is the head of the order (and often the founder), assisted by a small number of Masters. One Master for every ten to twenty students is typical.

An order may appoint instructors to specialist training roles such as weapons training instructor, meditation instructor, or physical training instructor.

It is common for schools (especially those in isolated areas) to employ a small number of domestic servants to assist with domestic duties in running the school. Payment is often boarding, food and a small stipend.

Location of Monastic Schools

In the Kingdom of Shar, monasteries are typically contained within fortified compounds in cities. Monks have positions of leadership in many governmental offices. The compounds of the monks are an integral part of the inner city and often serve as a secure location for the foremost secrets of the order (and for the most valuable items, artefacts and lore). The largest monastery seems to be located in Hesuel Ilshar but monasteries can likely be found in all sizable population centres within that nation.

In the Baklunish West, key monasteries tend to be located away from key population centres. This is deemed appropriate for religious solitude and mental mastery, removing the distractions of being immersed in a city.

Some Baklunish orders have monasteries located in towns and cities as best suits the purposes of the order. The larger orders typically have small monasteries in important cities that serve as accommodation and training facilities to monks with duties in that city (whilst also helping to create interest for new recruits).

For the open orders spread across the rest of the Flanaess monasteries are often located in secluded areas. The isolated location of monasteries supports the kind of focus required in the monastic traditions and allows students to focus solely on their development.



Art by Holly Azelrod

The Baklunish have the longest history of martial monastic orders. Their combined orders produce more fighting monks than any other race in the Flanaess.

The Scarlet Brotherhood promotes the supremacy of the Suel race and pure blood Suel who pass the entry tests join the elite tier of monks leading that nation.

Suel and part-Suel from other areas of the Flanaess have become fighting monks in other open orders. Part of the challenge for such monks who appear to have Suel heritage is convincing others they are not part of the Scarlet Brotherhood (and so, they typically carefully avoid wearing any shade of red!).

Mixed heritage humans and Oeridians are highly represented in the open orders that have spread throughout the land. Oeridian culture is well disposed to martial discipline and some of the most successful open orders were founded or enhanced by Oeridians.

Half-elf monks, while rare, seem to be over-represented in martial monastic orders. Physically the race is well-suited to the required training, and they cope better than other races with the isolation which often comes with learning monastic traditions (and perhaps many of them seek it).

Other demi-humans are very rarely monks but there are reports of dwarves, elves and even halflings displaying the attributes of martial monastic monks – though to which order they belong is a mystery. It is presumably a smaller open order, as there are no known martial monastic traditions amongst the demi-humans.

Major Orders

The major orders of the Flanaess are the **Order of the Scarlet Sign** (Scarlet Brotherhood) and the three ancient Baklunish orders. These are the only orders with enough members (typically over a hundred active members) to be classified as major orders.

ORDER OF THE SCARLET SIGN

The Order of the Scarlet Sign is the singular martial monastic order of the Scarlet Brotherhood and as such has achieved a degree of fame (or perhaps infamy) unmatched by any other order.

The Order of the Scarlet Sign is tightly integrated into the politics and leadership of the Scarlet Brotherhood nation.

Purpose & Goals: To lead the Suel race to their natural place as the supreme race of the Flanaess and beyond. To preserve the role of order as the preeminent element of the leadership triad of the Scarlet Brotherhood.

Enemies & Allies: The Order of the Scarlet Sign has no allies. While they bear an historical enmity toward the Baklunish, they seek to dominate and subjugate all other

racess,

Entry Requirements & Restrictions: Promising applicants are invited to apply at a young age as part of the Brotherhood's trial selection program. Only a few applicants are successful and not all survive the trials.

Membership is restricted to pure-blood Suel males and females of good standing in the Scarlet Brotherhood.

Membership of this order is almost exclusively Lawful Evil.

Members & Monasteries: Membership has been estimated to be over five hundred, but reliable intelligence on this order is notoriously hard to come by.

Monasteries can be found in Hesuel Ilshar, Kro Terlep, Ekul and Dancardeen. The Order of the Scarlet Sign guards their secrets very closely. As such there are no monasteries or dedicated schools outside of the lands of the Shar.

Leadership & Governance: An enigmatic figure known as Father of Obedience (Korenth Zan LE ml Suel Mnk18).

Code of Conduct: The code of conduct for this order is as much dictated by the rules of the Scarlet Brotherhood as by the order. Obedience is highly prized, as is zeal in the cause of Suel supremacy. The monks act in reliable and predictable ways and like structure. They are capable of thoroughly

heinous acts in the name of their goals (as can be attested to by the population of their conquered territories).

Training & Weapons: The unarmed fighting style of the order is considered a 'hard' style focusing on swift offensive capabilities using punches, strikes and kicks. While it is not an especially acrobatic style, members nonetheless demonstrate remarkable agility and balance in combat.

Masters of this style demonstrate the ability to sunder shields with their blows and deliver a terrifying attack that they call the quivering palm.

Monks of the Scarlet Sign are known to use the following weapons: short sword, light crossbow, spear, staff, hand axe, club.

Clothing & Appearance: Traditional clothing of the order when not in disguise is a loose-fitting scarlet-colored trousers and top of thin cotton material, with a sash, belt, and boots. Cloaks with hoods are worn in colder climates as required.

Brotherhood monks wear other clothes as required when undercover or wishing to go unnoticed.

The Brotherhood now actively discourages members from any appearance that may compromise their ability to go undercover, as such shaven heads and tattoos are actively discouraged.

Notes & Rumors: Monks of the Scarlet Sign receive an extensive education (particularly in military strategy and diplomacy). Monks are known to deliver terrible physical punishments to enemies of the state as a public spectacle.



ORDER OF THE BLACK LOTUS

This ancient Baklunish order is affiliated with the Baklunish Goddess **Xan Yae** – the Perfect Mistress. Members of the order study her teachings and strive for perfection of self in mind and body.

This order is one of the oldest known orders and can trace its history back for over 500 years before the Invoked Devastation.

Purpose & Goals: The purpose of this order is to encourage members to strive for perfection as a tribute to **Xan Yae**. The members so equipped can then serve the goddess and the Baklunish people by carrying out the will of **Xan Yae**. This includes recruiting new students, protecting the church of **Xan Yae** and spreading word of her teachings.

There is a degree of rivalry amongst the largest Baklunish schools and while this almost never results in open conflict, it does become more obvious at competitions and games held between the major Baklunish orders.

Enemies & Allies: The members of this school would actively seek to foil members of the Scarlet Brotherhood at any opportunity.

While the order has a competitive rivalry with other large Baklunish orders, they are all united by their reverence of **Xan Yae**.

Entry Requirements & Restrictions: Entry to this order is only available to Baklunish males and females who have devoted themselves to **Xan Yae's** teachings.

The membership of this order is mostly Neutral with a handful of Lawful Neutral members.

Members & Monasteries: The Order of the Black Lotus is a large order with at least 700 active members and seven schools.

There are three large schools in Ekbir (120), Zief (110) and Tusmit (100); two medium schools in Greyhawk (50) and Kofeh (55); and two small schools in Ull (50) and Fashtri (45).

Leadership & Governance: This order is led by a Grandmaster advised by a council of Elders.

Code of Conduct: Members must tithe 10% of any gains to the church. Students of this order are expected to show deference to the clergy of **Xan Yae** and be respectful of all Baklunish customs.

Training & Weapons: Initiates of this order learn how to use the following weapons: falchion, short sword, staff, darts, spear. However, following the Xan Yae philosophy of perfect symmetry, students typically focus on using twin blades. To begin with most schools teach the use of twin butterfly swords (a short one sided blade). When students have proven themselves capable, they typically move to the order's signature weapon style of twin falchions.

All members are highly trained in the art of Da'Shon, which utilizes punches, kicks, blocks and throws. The style incorporates acrobatic elements and is considered a mix of hard and soft combat styles.

Clothing & Appearance: Monks of this order typically wear dusk colored clothing with a black lotus symbol on the center of their chest. They shun any bright colors. Tattoos are forbidden by the order.

Notes & Rumors: Having the longest traceable history of any martial monastic order in the Flanaess provides this order with a significant degree of prestige, which is even acknowledged outside of the Baklunish West by other orders (though not including the Scarlet Brotherhood).

ORDER OF THE IRON FIST

This religious sect is the foremost order devoted to the teachings of the Baklunish deity Zuoken.

Purpose & Goals: Members of the order seek attainment of perfection and purity of body in devotion to Zuoken. Like their deity they strive to forgesrive forge their bodies into living weapons.

The current primary goal of the order is to seek to release Zuoken from his prison somewhere in the Flanaess. This quest has been on-going for decades and the lack of success has led to many schisms within the order. Some members lost faith that Zuoken would ever be founded and they invested their efforts, resulting in some cases in new orders being established.

This also had the effect of sending members of the order East into non-Baklunish lands in search of their deity.

Enemies & Allies: The order are avowed enemies of the Scarlet Brotherhood. Quite a few other orders and schools can trace their origins to this order. Relations with some of the splinter schools can be strained.

Entry Requirements & Restrictions: Membership of this order is open to Baklunish males and females who are dedicated to Zuoken's teachings and can pass a demanding selection test.

Non-Baklunish exceptions to membership are not unheard of, especially in the monasteries located in the East. The Dark Moon Monastery in the City of Greyhawk is notable for making exceptions to worthy students and this is a source of irritation to those in the order who would resist the acceptance of non-Baklunish students. The clergy of Zuoken view it as a useful way to gain more adherents.

Members of this order are mostly Neutral, with a sizable minority of Lawful Neutral members and a small handful of Lawful Good members.

Members & Monasteries:

The Order of the Iron Fist numbers over 600 active members. Many members of other orders and schools can trace their origins to a member of this order. It is second only in prestige to the Order of the Black Lotus.

In the early days of the order there were four sacred monasteries built in the Ullsprue Mountains. Only two survived the Invoked Devastation.

The most sacred monastery of the order is the Falla-nil Monastery on a mountain peak at the northernmost tip of the Ullsprue Mountains. It is said to contain scrolls of the original teaching of Zuoken. It is home to the most powerful members of the order as well as a companion order of Psions likewise dedicated to Zuoken and known as the Zefim. Approximately two hundred members of the order are located here.

The Azor-Khem Monastery is located sixty miles south of the Falla-nil Monastery and was reportedly once a favourite

visitation site of Zuoken. However, since Zuoken has not visited for many decades the importance of this association has greatly diminished. Approximately eighty members of the order live at the monastery.

Of all the major Baklunish orders, this order has the greatest presence outside of the Baklunish West. The genesis of this can be found in the search for Zuoken which saw members of the order actively exploring the East in search of their imprisoned deity. This saw exposure of the monks to people who had previously never seen fighting monks before. Additionally, as some members of the order lost faith in ever finding Zuoken they left, while in the East and established open order schools.

The Flannae-tel Monastery (sixty members) was the first known establishment of a monastery of a Baklunish order in the Eastern lands. It is located in a secluded valley of the Cairn Hills, in the Duchy of Urnst and Mistress Li Hon (Neutral Female Human Monk L17N fml Hmn Mnk17) is the Master of this Monastery.

Other monasteries of the order can be found in Ekbir, Ull, Zeif and Tusmit. There is thought to be a small monastery in Bissel.

One of the most recent establishments is the Dark Moon Monastery located in the City of Greyhawk. It is only decades old but has quickly gained in fame due to its location in the 'Gem of the Flanaess'. It has approximately 40 members of whom a significant minority are visitors from monasteries to the West.

Leadership & Governance: The order is led by the Supreme Iron Fist, who is Grandmaster of the Order.

A council of Iron Elders provides guidance to the Grandmaster.

Each monastery is headed by a Master.

The most sought after monastery positions are at the two sacred monasteries of the order. However, the popularity and success of the new monasteries in the East is upsetting to members of the conservative factions.

Code of Conduct: All members of the order abide by a strict code of conduct laid down in sacred texts of the order. Wealth is viewed as a distraction on the path to perfection and is strongly discouraged.

Training & Weapons: Members of this order practice Da'shon (Falling Hail) which is a fighting style common to the major Baklunish monastic orders. Each order has made variations to the style that reflect their own specialties.

Some members of this order are known to study two special techniques. The Iron Body is a defensive technique that hardens the body and provides the ability to resist damage. The Iron Fist technique enables a monk to summon energy or ki to fortify the impact of blows from his hands.

For weapons training, junior members are taught to use staff, club, kukri, hand axe, spear and light crossbow. At senior levels of the order use of any weapon is strongly discouraged.

Clothing & Appearance: Members of the order wear loose fitting clothing tending to grey and blues with gold trim highlights. Many members have a tattoo of Zuoken's symbol on their forearms.

Notes & Rumors: The quest to locate Zuoken goes on for the majority of the order that remain faithful to the cause. Leadership of the order is concerned at the number of members that are leaving the order and starting their own orders or schools.

The order has several strong factions vying for influence and prestige. The conservative faction seeks a return to the 'old ways' and stricter entry requirements.

ORDER OF THE TWILIGHT SHADOW

The smaller of the two ancient Baklunish orders dedicated to **Xan Yae**, the **Order of the Twilight Shadow** focuses on the stealthy and shadowy elements of Xan Yae's teachings. Members are known to be experts in stealth techniques.

Purpose & Goals: Strive for perfection in the name of the Perfect Mistress of Flowers. Demonstrate to the other orders that to be stealthy is the foremost discipline.

Enemies & Allies: The Scarlet Brotherhood is an avowed enemy. The major Baklunish religious orders are all allies, though a competitive rivalry exists between them.

Entry Requirements & Restrictions: Entry is open to Baklunish males and females who pass the entry tests. Applicants must be devoted to the teachings of **Xan Yae**. There is a specific entry test for this order designed to assess a candidate's stealth. As an older traditional order that has not moved East, applicants outside of the Baklunish are nearly unheard of, though there have been a few splinter groups formed out of former members of this order.

Members of the order are almost exclusively Neutral with a minor handful of Lawful Neutral members.

Members & Monasteries: Monasteries are located exclusively in the Baklunish West – mainly in Ekbir, Zeith, Ull and Tusmit.

This order has approximately 300 active members.

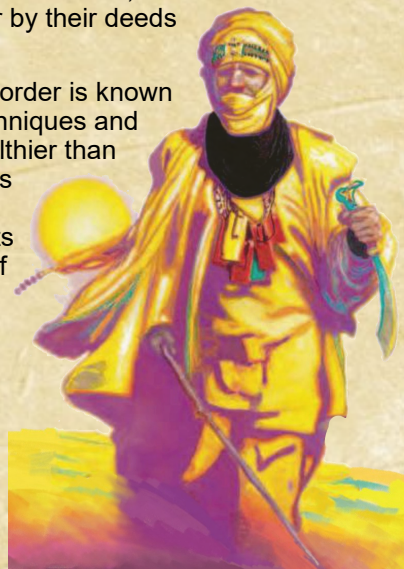
Leadership & Governance: A grandmaster known as the Shadowmaster leads the order advised by a council of Elders.

Code of Conduct: Like the other major Baklunish orders, this order has a strict code of conduct that reflects that basic tenets of Baklunish society. Above all else, members must not bring dishonour to the order by their deeds and actions.

Training & Weapons: This order is known for their expertise in stealth techniques and pride themselves on being stealthier than any other order. Much training is devoted to hiding in shadows and silent footwork which results in seemingly impossible feats of stealth.

Weapons taught by this order include staff, spear, hand axe, dagger, short bow and falchion.

Clothing & Appearance: Clothing of this order is always dusky and colors are studiously avoided. Members



Art courtesy of Wizards of the Coast

typically have short close-cropped haircuts but do not usually shave their heads.

Notes & Rumors: This order has been in steady decline for some time. The Grandmaster holds more influence and has more control over the order than is normal in other orders. There is a growing faction calling for new leadership.

Minor Orders

The overwhelming majority of orders in the Flanaess are considered minor orders because they have less than a hundred members.

Smaller orders are so numerous because many accomplished students leave orders to form their own order. The reasons for this vary. For some it is the prestige of being the head of their own order. For others it is to take their training in a direction that was not allowed by their original order.

As there is no organized forum for monks across the Flanaess, there is no easy way for orders to achieve a degree of fame, so most orders remain largely anonymous, even amongst other monks. This is especially true when the potential pool of recruits is so small, both because of people's ability and their desire to enter an order.

Relationships between orders are especially complex. Due to recent events across the Flanaess, the Scarlet Brotherhood has become the most famous (infamous) of monastic orders. Tales of the abilities of their scarlet robed monks abound in taverns everywhere (some greatly exaggerated, some not).

The major Baklunish orders are well known in the Baklunish West and they are largely allied thanks to their religious affiliations. They all share a burning enmity for the Scarlet Brotherhood.

Relationships outside of the major orders get much more complicated. Many orders or schools originated as splinter groups from another order. This sometimes results in enmity or aggression, depending on the circumstances of the leaving. Alternatively, the common connection sometimes also results in alliances.

The major Baklunish orders look down upon all others other orders as being lesser orders, given the impressively long history and lineage of the major orders. There is also a tendency for them to look down on 'open' orders who are less restrictive on entry requirements.

There is a slight tendency toward competition between schools, but it is rare for this to result in direct violence unless there is an obvious grievance or cause for conflict (such as between the Baklunish and the Scarlet Brotherhood).

Below is a list of the known minor monastic orders to be found across the Flanaess. There is very likely to be many more than are listed here. They all number less than one hundred members, with most having far less than that.

ORDER OF THE MERCIFUL HAND

This order traces its origins to an ancient Flan religious order of monks, dedicated to promoting peace and harmony. The more martial minded members of the original order developed a method of unarmed combat suitable for restraining and disabling foes without rendering them

permanently harmed. Over scores of many score years this order refined the method but found that as they progressed the method demanded more and more of their bodies and minds. To achieve this the monks followed strict discipline in meditation and stillness of mind along with harsh physical training for their bodies. This enabled them to continue to develop the combat form they have today. As the effectiveness of the combat style grew the monks were able to do Zodal's work more effectively. Word then spread of these peaceful monks who healed the sick and defended the downtrodden. More applicants turned up at their monasteries and the order grew. The order placed no restrictions on race, though initially they were mostly Flan applicants.

Purpose & Goals: This order was established to serve the needy and protect the weak and undefended. They believe spreading a message of service and benevolence, others will take to their example.

Enemies & Allies: No enemies other than those who perform evil acts. This order would ally with any group serving the cause of good.

Entry Requirements & Restrictions: Although originally founded as a Flan order, the order places no racial restrictions on the race of an applicant.

Members of this order are most often Lawful Good with some Lawful Neutral.

All prospective members must be devoted to Zodal and his teachings.

Members & Monasteries: Originally founded in Tenh and has since spread to the surrounding lands. This order does not usually have formal monasteries and the art and methods are usually transferred from senior member to junior member by informal relationship. As such the order is dispersed and difficult to find.

There are likely to be less than a hundred active members of this order.

Leadership & Governance: Sister Shyanne the Merciful, Grandmistress of the Merciful Hand (Lawful Good, Female Human Monk L13LG fml Hmn Mnk13).

Code of Conduct: This order has a strong focus on helping others. Members provide tithes to the order and these funds are used to help the needy. Members of this order seek to protect the poor, the defenceless, the downtrodden and the needy. As such members are very highly regarded by their communities.

Any members found to violate the trust of the community or knowing living to the values of the order would be dismissed and exiled.

Training & Weapons: This order is known to have superior healing abilities and highly advanced knowledge of treatments and remedies (including herbs).

Members appear to be trained with club, staff and spear and light crossbow, though they are strongly encouraged to only use blunt weapons.

The style of unarmed combat developed by the original Flan focuses on holds, restraints and throws.

Clothing & Appearance: Members do not appear to have a distinctive set of clothing, but all members wear white

wrappings around both hands, leaving the fingers free.

Notes & Rumors: The lack of monasteries and the areas in which members operate means that recruitment of the order is ad-hoc and difficult. The result of that combined with their difficult self-imposed mission, means the order is in slow decline.

ORDER OF THE GREY GLAIVE

This order was established in the Vast Swamp by adherents of the toad god Wastri (some say by the deity himself).

Purpose & Goals: This order reveres the toad god Wastri and their aims reflect the aims of the deity himself. They regularly engage in the 'sport' of hunting demi-humans.

Enemies & Allies: This order is despised by largely everyone, and especially the Scarlet Brotherhood.

Members of the order are closely allied with the clergy and other followers of Wastri.

Entry Requirements & Restrictions: To enter the order, applicants must be human (preferably of Suel extraction) and absolutely devoted to Wastri and his teachings (so there are very few applicants).

Nearly all members of this order are Lawful Evil.

Members & Monasteries: Rumors persist of a monastery dedicated to Wastri hidden somewhere in the middle of the Vast Swamp, though this stronghold is likely used by Wastri's clergy and followers and only part of it is used by the small number of fighting monks of the order.

Membership numbers of the order are not known. The few credible scholars and sages in this area suggest numbers would be below fifty.

Leadership & Governance: Unknown, but it is thought that members would defer to senior clergy of Wastri for direction.

Code of Conduct: Members follow the teachings of the toad god Wastri so there is a large element of racial bigotry amongst the membership.

Training & Weapons: Training of this order has two signature elements. The first is significant leaping ability, above that displayed by other monks. Fighting monks of the order have been seen to leap extraordinary distances and this ability has been incorporated into their fighting style.

The other element is the use of their signature weapon - the glaive. Members appear to be proficient with spear, club, hand axe and light crossbow.

Clothing & Appearance: The loose clothing worn by the order is grey and dirty yellow in color. Many members also appear to show the same cosmetic bodily afflictions as their deity.

Notes & Rumors: There is a rumor that there is a historical link between this order the Scarlet Brotherhood.

ORDER OF THE IRON WIND

This order was established in the hills East of Irongate by a master of Oeridian/Suel extraction. The fighting style bears some resemblance to Baklunish styles (Da'Shon) but with

more emphasis on swift flowing movements with short sharp attacks. The mantra of this order is 'move like the wind and strike like iron'.

Purpose & Goals: This order has no known goals beyond the successful transfer of knowledge to new students.

Enemies & Allies: It is suggested the order has a strong enmity with the Scarlet Brotherhood.

Entry Requirements & Restrictions: This is an open order who places no restrictions on applicants beyond alignment and the need to pass the entry tests.

Members of this order are mostly Lawful Good with a sizable Lawful Neutral element.

Members & Monasteries: This order has less than fifty members all located at the one monastery East of Irongate. The monastery itself however is quite impressive, having been made of stone and built into the side of a hill. It is a deliberately arduous climb just to arrive at the gate.

Leadership & Governance: The master of the order (Lawful Good Female Human Monk L10 / Fighter L4LG fml Hmn Mnk10/Ftr4) is known to be an expert with a three-section staff (the signature weapon of the order). Several senior members assist with the training.

Code of Conduct: No known special code of conduct beyond the lawful tendencies of the members. Members of the order who do not reside at the monastery are thought to provide tithes.

Training & Weapons: This order places considerable emphasis on swift flowing circular movements in combat, along with significant jumping techniques.

Members train extensively with bludgeoning weapons including club, staff and eventually the three-piece staff. Members are also proficient in the use of spears, hand axes and light crossbows, but their use is discouraged.

Clothing & Appearance: The loose flowing robes worn by this order feature various shades of blues and greys. They have no other distinguishing features.

Notes & Rumors: The female master of the school has some obvious Suel heritage (including blonde hair). This has resulted in a rumor that this is a secret undercover outpost of the Scarlet Brotherhood. In truth this order is vehemently opposed to the Scarlet Brotherhood.

ORDER OF THE SPLINTERED MIND

This order was established by former members of the Scarlet Brotherhood.

Purpose & Goals: The goal of this order is to bring down the Scarlet Brotherhood.

Enemies & Allies: The Scarlet Brotherhood is an avowed enemy.

Entry Requirements & Restrictions: Unknown.

Members & Monasteries: There are around fifty members of this order. A handful of senior members are located in Irongate where the order was founded, however there is no monastery located in the City of Irongate. The new (and now only) monastery is located on the fringes of

Scant in Onnwal.

Leadership & Governance: Unknown.

Code of Conduct: Unknown.

Training & Weapons: Unknown.

Clothing & Appearance: Unknown.

Notes & Rumors: Unknown.

ORDER OF THE NIGHT STALKERS

This order was established in Bissel long ago by a former member of the Order of the Iron Fist. This order now bears little resemblance to its origins, largely producing mercenaries who specialize in night operations and infiltration techniques.

Purpose & Goals: This order has no obvious goals beyond growth and the success of the order's mercenary undertakings.

Enemies & Allies: It is thought they are not well-disposed to the Order of the Iron Fist (and this is reciprocated).

Entry Requirements & Restrictions: Members of this order can be of any race. They must pass a rigorous entrance test that is quite dangerous.

Members of this order are either Lawful Neutral or Lawful Evil.

Members & Monasteries: Between 50 and 100 members in this order. There are less than one hundred members of this order but more than fifty.

Leadership & Governance: A triad of three Elders provide leadership for this order.

Code of Conduct: Members of this order have the outlook, disposition and detachment of true mercenaries. They abide by all business agreements because that is good for future business.

Training & Weapons: Members of this order specialize in stealth and infiltration techniques. They have substantial skills operating as acrobats and second story thieves.

Members are trained with light crossbows, hand axes, spears, short swords, clawed bracers and garottes.

Clothing & Appearance: Members of this order wear black clothing with hoods and have (the accurate) appearance of typical assassins. They usually wear masks and hoods.

Notes & Rumors: There is a persistent rumor that this order has been infiltrated by agents of the Scarlet Brotherhood.

ORDER OF THE PEACEKEEPERS

This order began when a fighting monk was travelling on a mission through Veluna and was exposed to the teachings of Rao. The monk had lost faith with his order after many missions of violence and the teachings of Rao struck a chord.

Purpose & Goals: The goal of this order is to bring peace and serenity to all through Rao's teachings. The order is not affiliated with the Church of Rao and runs as an independent

order. They offer the services of their members to interested parties seeking to resolve a dispute or bring about peace. They can often be found travelling on missions acting as diplomats, negotiators and bodyguards.

Enemies & Allies: They are opposed to the goals of the Scarlet Brotherhood.

Entry Requirements & Restrictions: Prospective applicants must be very knowledgeable in the teachings of Rao and pass rigorous tests designed to test a student's physical abilities and meditative abilities.

Members & Monasteries: Members of this order number around sixty. Almost all members of this order are Lawful Good.

Leadership & Governance: A single Grandmaster – the Keeper of the Peace – leads the order guided by three advisors.

Code of Conduct: All members abide by a strict code of honourable conduct reflecting the values espoused by Rao. Whilst they earnestly seek peace and negotiation they will resort to violence when necessary to bring about peace, however they are forbidden to strike first.

Training & Weapons: Members trained with the staff and fighting sticks (clubs).

Clothing & Appearance: Unknown.

Notes & Rumors: None.

ORDER OF THE SILKEN VEIL

This order was founded in the Baklunish West by a female member of the Order of the Twilight Shadow who lost faith with the teachings of Xan Yae after a series of unfortunate events involving domination by powerful and despotic influential men. She founded an order with the intent of using a male's weakness against them.

This is an order of female assassins who have repeatedly demonstrated that an unarmed female (particularly an alluring one) can get entry into many places not accessible to men (including harems).

Purpose & Goals: This order is a mercenary order carrying out assassinations and other missions for profit.

Enemies & Allies: The order is regarded as an enemy by most Baklunish orders. They have no allies other than their extensive list of customers.

Entry Requirements & Restrictions: Entry is by demanding physical test, usually also requiring either sponsorship by an existing member or an act of significant service.

All members of the order are Lawful Evil.

Members & Monasteries: There are thought to be nearly one hundred members of this order. They have a secret monastery in the hills outside of Zeif where they perform training. The order has safe houses in most major cities in the Baklunish West.

Leadership & Governance: Leader by the Supreme Mistress of Veils.

Code of Conduct: Members of the order act by a mercenary code of conduct and are fanatically loyal to the order (and

this is tested constantly). They pay little regard to Baklunish custom and no regard to local laws.

Training & Weapons: While fully trained in an unarmed combat style derived from Da'Shon, the order also trains within an extensive set of weapons, including dagger, garotte, spear, short sword, and katar.

Members of the order are known to utilize poison. They train in is other areas useful to missions including second story entry, seduction, dance, etiquette and lock picking.

Clothing & Appearance: Members of the order where whatever clothing is useful to execute the mission, which is often performed while undercover. When not acting uncover they wear clothing designed to blend in with the local population.

Notes & Rumors: None

ORDER OF THE GUDGEL

This order is believed to have been established by fighting monks exposed to the teachings of St Cuthbert in lands of the central Flanaess. The order is small but has a loyal and stable membership.

Purpose & Goals: The main goal of this order is to spread the word of St Cuthbert.

Enemies & Allies: None.

Entry Requirements & Restrictions: No racial entry requirements. Applicants must be able to demonstrate devotion to St Cuthbert and pass a series of demanding physical tests.

Members & Monasteries: Members of this order number around fifty.

Membership is evenly split between Lawful Neutral and Lawful Good.

Leadership & Governance: Lead by the High Cudgel. Has clergy of St Cuthbert providing religious training.

Code of Conduct: All members abide by a strict code of honourable conduct reflecting the values espoused by St Cuthbert.

Training & Weapons: Members trained with the cudgel, club, staff and light crossbow.

Clothing & Appearance: Members of this order shave all or most of their head.

Notes & Rumors: None.

ORDER OF THE DESERT VIPER

This order is believed to have been established in Ekbir. The fighting style is clearly based on Da'Shon but focuses on the use of the spear as a signature weapon. Members of the

order are justly feared on the battlefield.

Purpose & Goals: The purpose of the order is understood. They produce excellent warriors.

Enemies & Allies: Unknown.

Entry Requirements & Restrictions: No racial entry requirements or alignment restrictions.

Members & Monasteries: Members of this order number around sixty.

Membership is evenly split between Neutral, Lawful Neutral and Lawful Evil.

Leadership & Governance: Unknown.

Code of Conduct: Unknown.

Training & Weapons: The unarmed combat style is a version of Da'Shon that incorporates additional lounging, jumping and spinning.

The spear is taught as a signature weapon and is used in an extensively mobile fashion, spinning and twirling as a means to distract and intimidate opponents.

Clothing & Appearance: Members of this order all wear a red sash tied around their waist.

Notes & Rumors: None.

RUMORS OF OTHER ORDERS

There are many rumors of other many other orders. Some have passed into history, some may still exist in some small secluded enclave somewhere.

Sages recall some mentions of a monk like order located in the Olman islands.

The following orders exist as unverified rumors:

Order of the Glory Everlasting: An order of Fighting Monks devoted to Heironeous based in the Central Flanaess and devoted to the downfall of Iuz. It was founded by Luther (refer to Rogues Gallery).

Order of the Iron Shield: (Irongate, Onnwal) Based in the lands of the Iron League and devoted to the mission of the same. No racial entry requirements, alignment is LN/LG. Strongly militaristic. Speak Ferral.

The following orders have been mentioned by name only:

- ♦ **Order of Silent Thunder**
- ♦ **Order of the Dancing Dragon**
- ♦ **Order of the Four Winds**
- ♦ **Order of the Leopard**

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Name (Order of the...)	Member Numbers	Origin	Entry Restrictions	Main Align ment	Religious Affiliation	Weapons	Locations	Notes
Major Orders								
Scarlet Sign	900	Suel	Suel of the SB	LE	None	Short sword, Spear, Hand Axe, Crossbow	Tilvanot Peninsula	The Monastic Order that leads the Scarlet Brotherhood (SB).
Black Lotus	700	Baklunish	Baklunish	N	Xan Yae	Falchion	Baklunish West	Ancient Baklunish order.
Iron Fist	600	Baklunish	Baklunish	N	Zuoken	Staff, Spear, Club, but none at senior levels	Ullsprue Mountains, Baklunish West, Urnst, Sheldomar Valley	Ancient Baklunish order.
Twilight Shadow	400	Baklunish	Baklunish	N	Xan Yae	Staff, Spear, Hand Axe, Falchion, Shortbow	Baklunish West	Ancient Baklunish order.

Minor Orders (typically 100 members or less) – there are significantly more minor orders than these examples

Merciful Hand	100	Flan	Open	LG	Zodal	Staff, club, blunt weapons	Tenh, central Flanaess (dispersed)	Ancient religious order now dispersed.
Grey Glaive	60	Suel	Suel / Open	LE	Wastri	Glaive	The Vast Swamp	
Iron Wind	50	??	Open	LG	None	Three section staff	Near Irongate	Typical 'open order' of the East.
Splintered Mind	50	Suel / SB	Open?	LG	None	Short sword, spear	Onnwal	SB splinter faction.
Night Stalkers	90	??	Open	LN / LE	None	Short sword, spear, hand axe, crossbow	HQ in Bissel	Mercenary order.
Peacekeepers	60	??	Open	LG	Rao	Staff, club	Veluna	
Silken Veil	100	Baklunish	Open (female)	LE	None	Dagger, Garrote, Spear, Short sword	Baklunish West	Trained female assassins.
Cudgel	50	??	Open	LN / LG	St. Cuthbert	Club/Cudgel	Central Flanaess	
Desert Viper	60	Ekbir	Open	LN	None	Spear	Baklunish West	Spear masters

THE LEZCY



Old Man of the Woods

By Nathan Doyle, *Attention Deficit & Dragons*
illustration by Adam Koca

Lore/History

If you listen to some of the old wives tales, they would have you believe that the old man of the woods is a shapechanger. That he has horns like a fiend and is often surrounded by feral wolves and bears. The old man of the woods leads lone travelers astray and kidnaps children that are looking for firewood. The leszy is none of these things and yet all of them at the same time. The stories told about the leszy, or the old man of the woods, are based on some truth. But these stories are born of the fear of the encroachment of the wilds back into areas that people wish would stay civilized.

The leszy represents the pure unbridled chaos of nature and its potential for growth. A leszy doesn't care about the people harmed by the forest or its denizens, except enough to ensure that the people don't burn the forest down in spite. A leszy will usually allow people to hunt in its woods as well as harvest trees, so long as they do not overdo it and destroy the forest in the process. It is also not uncommon for a druid or even an entire circle of druids to congregate with a leszy to gain wisdom from the creatures.

Can't See the Forest for the Trees. A leszy can generally only be seen for what it is if it wishes you to. If it is not moving

about the forest, and it rarely needs to do so, a person cannot tell it apart from any of the other trees in the forest it protects. In the circumstances where a leszy migrates to another forest, it will eventually take on the traits of the new grove. Some have described them in such a way that leads some scholars to believe that a leszy is related to a treant somehow, but the only evidence in that is that both treants and leszy resemble trees that walk and have a face when they wish someone to hear them speak.

Misleading. Leszy do sometimes lead travelers astray, but they are usually those who abuse the forest in some manner. The way that a leszy does so is usually subtle and without malice. The leszy will usually just coax the plants to cover the trail and make it appear that the path through the woods is something other than the right path. But then a leszy usually doesn't kill these people, allowing them to find their own ways out if they are able. They do sometimes succumb to wildlife though.

Shepherd of Lost Children. Leszy do not kidnap children, at least not in the traditional sense. Children who are unwanted or who run away will sometimes be found by a leszy. In some circumstances these children become feral, mimicking the wild animals in the forest. In other circumstances these children take on a role of protector, becoming druids or rangers, sometimes going so far as to be the intermediary between the people and the leszy.

Leszy

Large plant, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 114 (12d10 + 48)

Speed 30 ft.

STR DEX CON INT WIS CHA
21 (+5) 8 (-1) 19 (+4) 14 (+2) 16 (+3) 14 (+2)

Saving Throws Wis +6

Skills Arcana +5, Nature +5

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing

Senses tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Druidic, Sylvan

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP) **Proficiency** +3

Abilities

False Appearance. While the leszy remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a normal tree or other foliage.

Innate Spellcasting. The leszy's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *animal friendship*, *druidcraft*, *speak with animals*, *speak with plants*

3/day each: *animal messenger*, *entangle*, *goodberry*, *spike growth*

1/day each: *plant growth*, *tree stride*

Siege Monster. The leszy deals double damage to objects and structures.

Actions

Multiattack. The leszy makes two slam attacks.

Slam. Melee Weapon Attack:

+8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 12 (2d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Thorny Vine.

Melee Weapon

Attack: +8

to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. **Hit:** 10 (2d4 + 5) piercing damage plus the target must succeed at a DC 16 Strength saving throw or be pulled to within 5 feet of the leszy.





One of the greatest things about the Greyhawk Community is, obviously, the fans. This is a topic we often discuss, because there are so many interesting projects consistently popping up.

It's always amazing what fans will create.

In the modern era, there are an innumerable resources a Greyhawk fan can use to find more information about their favorite setting—or new fans can use to learn about the setting. Amongst them are

In addition, we'd like to suggest many other "regular": social media sites, where users can use search terms to find a lot of great GH material: Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest, Reddit, and MeWe, for example. Also take a look at the top navigation bar on GreyhawkOnline.com for loads more links to resources, blogs, downloads, and other Greyhawk-related websites!

[Great Library of Greyhawk wiki](#)

[Oerth Journal magazine](#)

[Greyhawk Online \(and GHO Patreon\)](#)

[Canonfire](#)

[Greyhawk Resources FB group](#)

[Sages of Oerth FB Group](#)

[Anna Meyer's Maps](#)

[Greyhawkery](#)

[Greyhawk Stories](#)

[Greyhawk Companion](#)

[Maldin's Greyhawk](#)

[Grodog's Greyhawk](#)

[Greyhawk Musings](#)

[Greycast \(podcast\)](#)



Contact Us

If you're interested in submitting content, or offering suggestions for the Oerth Journal, or would like to help with putting it together, please feel free to contact the Editor via email anytime!

Admin@GreyhawkOnline.com

Visit us on the web at:

GreyhawkOnline.com

Issue #36— Richfest Open Call for Submissions!

The OJ doesn't always have a theme, even though each of the last year's issues all did.

For the next issue (#36) we're looking for articles specifically related in some way to Summer and Richfest. NPCs, spells, cultural articles, and lore move to the front of the line!

There will be *some* articles that aren't solely about Richfest and Summer, and articles are always needed for later issues ... we also need all manner of articles relating to WORLD OF GREYHAWK topics, relating to officially published sources, as well as fan-created material.

Submit a query for an article about anything you'd like, and we'll take a look at it! Send us a query about your article, to OJ@GreyhawkOnline.com and talk with us about what you'd like to write!

There's a lot to write about! A discussion of an element from officially published source, or a fan-created extension of something in one. Even completely new fanon material!

Consider what is **your** favorite thing about GH and submit to the OJ!!

Art by William Dvorak

WORLD OF GREYHAWK

A Haversack Full of Goodness!

A variety of new topics, await!
Including ecology and botany of the Flanaess, fiction, lore, and visitors from
all the way from Oerth's Crystal Sphere!

- ♦ Ply the Sea of Dust in skiffs with bands of treasure hunters!
- ♦ Laugh at the ever-fumbling Cultists of Tharizdun!
- ♦ Follow a tough halfling woman with a tame owlbear!
- ♦ Face a fearsome black dragon making its home in the Gnatmarsh!
- ♦ Discover the secret lands around the last city of the Suell
- ♦ More Constellations of Greyhawk: springtime stars!
- ♦ Fighting monk orders around the Flanaess!
- ♦ Find ancient magical books of the Suell
- ♦ Brave the forest protected by a new treant-like creature!
- ♦ More fiction!
- ♦ More resources!
- ♦ All the Greyhawk you ever need!

Creating and Sharing for the World of Greyhawk

